

i warned you: do not make an enemy of me

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by [andthentheybow](#)

Summary

With Technoblade and Dream locked up, Quackity decides that Tubbo and his nukes are now the world's greatest threat. And when Tubbo doesn't come home from a meeting with Las Nevadas, Ranboo gathers Tommy and the members of the Syndicate, who collectively decide they've had enough.

Notes

ok here we go i told myself i wouldnt start another multichap but i'm doing it anyways.

buckle up this one's gonna be a wild ride

Tubbo Underscore and the Terrible, Horrible, No-Good Very-Bad Day

It wasn't like Tubbo *wanted* to go to this meeting. He was very adamant against it, actually, but at Ranboo's insistence, he agreed to at least hear Quackity out. Negotiations surrounding the Outpost have been going on for at least a week now, with both sides refusing to budge. Quackity thinks it's infringing on his territory, even though Tubbo had been careful not to cross any borders when building it. Tubbo, meanwhile, will not see something he's built destroyed, not after all the other times.

Quackity was the one to reach out with a white flag, saying they could meet on neutral ground and come to a peaceful resolution. Tubbo didn't buy it. Ranboo, who was very sick of the fighting, asked Tubbo if he would *please* consider going. Never one to deny his husband, Tubbo agreed.

And now he stands here, on neutral territory, over the remains of L'Manberg. He doesn't know what in Prime's name compelled Quackity to choose this spot- maybe because they both lost things here. Either way, he's following Quackity's request of no armor, no weapons, just a peaceful meeting.

He's here alone- Ranboo is at home with Michael, and this is Tubbo's fight, anyways. When he sees Quackity approaching, he notes immediately that there are two others with him. There's the man who's definitely just the consciousness of some primordial being in a human-shaped slime body- Tubbo thinks he's just called Slime- and Sam. Sam's in full enchanted netherite; Quackity and Slime have nothing.

"I thought you said no armor, Big Q?" Tubbo calls as they approach. Quackity stops a good few meters back, holding out a hand to prevent Slime from moving any further. He grins at Tubbo in a sort of predatory way, one that would have the old Tubbo taking a step back. This Tubbo, however, doesn't feel fear, not when he knows that there's nothing that can hurt him, not really.

"Yeah, well, you know how Sam is," Quackity says. Sam says nothing, and Tubbo tries not to let the mask covering his face bother him. Men in masks never do good things, he's found. "So. Peaceful resolutions."

"I'll warn you," Tubbo says, and he keeps his voice calm and his composure open. He's not a threat. They have no reason to fear him. If his body language says that, they'll be much more likely to come to an agreement that he likes. "I'm not going to tear it down." He gestures to the broken land below them. "I'm sick of things I build being destroyed."

"I understand that, but Tubbo," Quackity says, and his grin is full of malice, his eyes are practically

glowing, and something is just inherently Wrong with it all. Tubbo considers leaving, then and there, but he's holding on to a little bit of hope that they'll work this out. "You threatened me, Tubbo. I can't stand for that."

"What, with the nuclear Gandhi joke?" Tubbo says. He knows that people know about the nukes, but most of them think it's just that- a joke. Only Tommy and Ranboo know the truth. "It was a joke, Quackity. It was me saying that I'm not going to let you destroy *my* buildings, or I'll destroy yours. I hear arson is quite popular."

"Oh, Tubbo," Quackity says, shaking his head. "I don't think it was a joke. I think you do have nuclear weapons- hell, who knows what else you have hidden away in that little commune of yours? And you know me- I'm all about protecting this world from its greatest threats. That's why I locked up Technoblade, that's why I visited Dream. To make sure there aren't any threats. And right now, Tubbo- you're a threat. So here's how this is going to go."

Sam advances. Tubbo holds his ground. He is not going to let them bully him around, not when he's been manipulated and shoved and talked over for so long, he is standing his ground, he is keeping his voice, he is- he is taking a step back when Quackity pulls out a crossbow with a firework already loaded, because shit, he has trauma, and yeah, he hasn't seen a therapist, and Quackity knows damn well how to hit Tubbo where it hurts.

"Here's how this is going to go," Quackity repeats. "We're going to take a little walk over to Pandora's Vault, nice and calm, so no one knows that anything's wrong. Sam and I are gonna march you inside. And we're going to lock you up until you tell us where the nukes are."

"And if I don't go with you peacefully?" Tubbo asks. There's a sick taste in his throat, and he knows they've got something cooked up, and he knows that he's not going to like it.

"Then I'll take out my communicator, and I'll talk to Foolish, and he'll kill your son," Quackity says. Tubbo's heart drops. "Easy as that. He's already in Snowchester. He's visiting Ranboo, in fact. He's in your house, Tubbo, and there's no way your husband can take him on alone. So if you don't go with us, Michael is as good as dead."

Tubbo goes with them peacefully. Quackity puts the crossbow away and walks next to him, Sam keeps his sword drawn and walks behind them. If he doesn't look back, Tubbo could almost pretend that it was just him and Quackity, back in the good old days, taking a walk down the prime path. But no, Sam is behind him with a sword to his back, and they're threatening his son, and he swears that he is going to make them pay.

The prison looms before them, tall and terrifying, and Tubbo can appreciate the amount of detail that went into it. It's secure, certainly, six months and not even Dream could break out, strong enough to hold the two almost-gods. Tubbo wonders if it'll be strong enough to hold him once Ranboo and Tommy find out where he is.

Once they're inside the prison, they waste no time confiscating his stuff. He didn't have much on him to begin with, but they take his communicator and his food, which is rather unfortunate. He's never been inside the prison before- Tommy's detailed the process out for him before, so he has some understanding of how it works, but it's different when you see it in person. The redstone work is intricate, and if it wasn't about to lock him up, he'd think it was beautiful.

Sam, ever the perfect guard, makes his way through the warden's side of things. Quackity forces Tubbo along through the visitor's end, crossbow held at the ready. Slime waits outside, under orders to yell if someone approaches. Tubbo studies the redstone mechanisms as they go, trying to memorize them, figure out how they work, but Quackity shoves him along too fast before he can really get a handle on it.

They stop at a long row of cells. Sam and Quackity pull back to talk for a moment, and Tubbo eyes the iron doors warily. He doesn't really fancy the idea of being put in a tiny room for days on end, at least until his husband and best friend can break him out, but he's been able to get a handle on his claustrophobia much better recently. He supposes he'll manage.

"Which one of these is mine, then?" he calls, and the two look over to him. Quackity laughs.

"You really think you're getting the VIP treatment?" he asks. "A cell all to yourself? No, Tubbo, you're a maximum-security prisoner now. And we only have one maximum-security cell."

This is the first time, through all of this, that Tubbo has actually felt fear. Apprehension at the crossbow, certainly. Disgust at the idea of being imprisoned, definitely. But fear- fear at the idea of being put in a cell with Dream and Technoblade, his two worst enemies, the two that have it out for him the most, the ones that have killed him and threatened him time and time again.

"No," he says, eyes wide, and he can feel the panic rising in his chest. "No, Quackity- Big Q- Sam- you can't put me in there, they'll kill me, they'll *kill* me-"

"Oh, Tubbo," Quackity laughs, and Sam sighs as he takes a step forward. "That's the point."

He brings the crossbow up. Tubbo backs away. The march through the prison continues, and he can hear the churning of the lava, the way Tommy described it, and holy shit, he's going to lose his last life here and no one is going to know what happened to him. He's going to die, forever and permanently, and-

"Move," Quackity growls, shoving the crossbow into his back, and Tubbo stumbles forward. He finds his footing and rights himself, and lets the determination pass through him. If he is going to die in here, then so be it.

They get to the lava wall quicker than Tubbo expected. Sam tells them to step on the platform and walk along with it, or else they'll face a fiery death. Quackity stands next to Tubbo, crossbow at his back, grip on his shoulders tight. It reminds Tubbo of Schlatt, the way the former president would put a hand on his shoulder and squeeze tight enough to leave bruises. Based on the look in Quackity's eyes, he knows exactly what he's doing.

"Sam?" a voice calls through the lava- Technoblade. "You here to finally let me out?"

"Not quite," Quackity yells back, and there's the sound of panic.

"Stop breaking, stop breaking," someone hisses, and then there's a few muttered curses, and the lava finishes dropping and the platform begins moving.

"Quackity," Techno says. He and Dream are standing next to each other, clearly covering something- Quackity doesn't seem to notice, too focused on trying to keep Tubbo from squirming. Techno's eyes land on Tubbo- Dream's do as well. They both just stare for a moment as the platform makes its way across the sea of red. "What's going on?"

"I brought you a guest!" Quackity says, grin wide. He waves the crossbow, firework still loaded inside, and then presses it to Tubbo's back again. "The three biggest threats to the server, all locked up in one place! Do what you want with him, kill him like you killed Tommy, I don't care."

"Biggest threat?" Techno snorts. "He's a kid. Not even a government anymore." He pauses. "Unless..."

"Unless," Quackity confirms. "He's here until he tells me where the nuclear weapons are, so I can confiscate them. Or until you kill him. Really, I don't care."

The platform is at the cell, now, and Quackity shoves Tubbo forward. He nearly hits the netherite blocks, but Quackity pulls him back. Techno and Dream haven't moved, still just staring at him. Quackity finally lets go of his shoulder. Tubbo is frozen, staring them down, and he can't move, can't breathe, he's going to die here-

He's going to die here. He steadies his breath. Techno and Dream are not looking at him like they want to kill him. They're looking at him like they understand, and they're looking at *Quackity* like they want to kill *him* .

"Have fun, boys," Quackity says, and he steps back onto the platform and lets it carry him away. The lava falls again, the netherite drops, and once Quackity is fully out of view, Techno and Dream both step aside.

There's a bell. There's a shiny, golden bell, sitting in the middle of the cell. Tubbo almost wants to laugh at the absurdity of it all, but he still feels too tense, backed nearly into the lava.

"You can relax, kid," Dream says, and he sounds... exhausted. "We're not going to hurt you."

"How do I know that?" Tubbo says, and he's surprised, almost, that his voice is holding strong. "The last time I saw you, you were threatening to kill me for the fun of it."

"That was a long time ago," Dream shrugs. "I've been reformed."

"You've been tortured," Techno tells him dryly.

"Tortured?" Tubbo asks. Dream shrugs again. Tubbo can see the amount of scars covering his body, and plenty of them look fairly recent, like they haven't been healed properly. Dream and Techno both act like it's no big deal. Maybe it isn't, to them.

"Quackity wants the knowledge of how to bring people back from the dead. I won't give it to him. He hasn't done anything since Techno got here, though, so maybe you'll get lucky. If he wants to know where the nukes are, he's not going to stop until he gets them."

So Quackity's going to come back and torture him, maybe. He's not going to crack- he doesn't really know how to describe how to get to the nukes, anyways, and he's never going to let Quackity get his hands on something that could be used to destroy Snowchester. But the idea of

being tortured is not a particularly exciting one.

“That’s just great,” Tubbo says sarcastically, and Dream snorts. Techno is still looking at him curiously.

“So the nukes are real, then?” he says.

“Of course they’re real,” Tubbo confirms. “What, you think I would joke about that?”

“Why? I thought you were peaceful now.”

Dream follows the conversation like he’s completely lost. He probably is.

“Because of you,” Tubbo snorts. “Because of-”

“Stop,” Techno says warningly, glancing at Dream. Oh. So they’re not talking about their families in front of Dream, then, they still don’t trust him. “I get it. I understand.”

Some sort of acknowledgement passes between them, and Tubbo nods. He takes a step away from the lava, and he looks at the bell.

“So what’s that doing here?” he asks, and Dream laughs.

“We summoned God,” he says casually, like it’s just a regular Tuesday occurrence. Techno nods to confirm it’s the truth.

Tubbo sits down. It’s going to be a long... however long this takes. Might as well get comfortable.

in which Ranboo Beloved thinks things feel Off

Ranboo Beloved loves his son. He does! But Michael is (they think) a three-year-old, and three-year-olds are, as expected, a lot of work. Michael's verbal communication is lacking, so they've been working on his writing skills. Which means Ranboo gets to sit at the kitchen table as Michael painstakingly writes out "Michael Underscore-Beloved" in giant block letters, cringing whenever he gets bits of crayon on the wood.

It's adorable, really, the look of pure concentration on his face. He glances up at Ranboo occasionally, and Ranboo always nods encouragingly. They've just begun to figure out that Michael's babbles, previously thought to just be the random noises of a toddler, are some sort of Piglin dialect that neither of them can understand. They managed to get their hands on a translation guide for rough Piglin, but most of Michael's speech is deformed into English pronunciations they can barely comprehend.

It's fine, Ranboo thinks. Michael knows basic phrases, he knows how to get what he wants, he knows what his name is and that Tubbo and Ranboo are Papa and Dada and who Uncle Tommy is. And that's enough! It's definitely enough.

Michael decides he's done writing his name when he gets to the hyphen between Underscore and Beloved. Ranboo doesn't blame him. He makes a noise that sounds like *play*, and Ranboo sighs and nods. Michael lets out a screech of joy and rushes away from his handwriting practice, and ever the watchful father, Ranboo follows him.

He checks the time as he goes- Tubbo should be back soon. He said if he was gone for more than an hour to rain hell on Quackity, which means 'find Tommy and see what's up.' After nearly twenty minutes of playing with Michael, with the ender particles around him getting more and more restless, Ranboo decides that it's been long enough.

"Come on, Michael," he says, standing up and stretching. Michael mimics his action. "We're gonna go find Uncle Tommy. Go get your shoes." This excites the kid immensely- going anywhere excites him immensely, really. His favorite places include the Syndicate and Phil's house- they won't let him anywhere near the ruins of L'Manberg or the Greater Dream SMP in general, just because they don't want too many people knowing about him.

Unfortunately, Foolish knows about him, meaning most of Las Nevadas probably knows about him by now. Speaking of the demigod, after Ranboo slips on Michael's coat and opens the door, he finds him standing in the front yard of the mansion.

“Hey, Foolish,” Ranboo says cheerfully. It’s not odd to see him around Snowchester- he claims he likes looking at old builds and finding ways to improve them, free of charge. Today, however, something seems Off. Ranboo can feel it in his gut; he’s talked about it with Tubbo and Tommy sometimes. Ranboo calls it seeming Off, Tubbo calls it feeling Wrong, and Tommy calls it anxiety. Right now, things are Off. “What’s going on?”

“Nothing, nothing,” Foolish says, laughing nervously. He eyes Michael, then quickly looks back up to Ranboo. Ranboo tightens his grip on Michael’s hand, and like he knows something is wrong, Michael shifts so that he’s slightly behind Ranboo’s leg. The ender particles are screaming at him to protect. “How’s the kid doing?”

“Good, good,” Ranboo nods. He bends down to pick the kid up, placing him carefully against his hip and holding him close. He doesn’t like the look Foolish gave him one bit; every paternal instinct he has is going off, telling him to keep his son close. He tries to hunt for a sense of normalcy, to not let Foolish know he knows something is wrong- “Tell him what word you learned, Michael.”

“Syn-di-cate,” Michael says, sounding out each syllable carefully, then looking up at Ranboo with pride when he’s finished. Foolish smiles, but it doesn’t reach his eyes. Ranboo focuses on the child in his arms. He is not going to let anything happen to his son, to his husband, to himself. Foolish can’t hurt him, not when he’s got the rage of a parent building, roaring to protect.

“Very nice,” Foolish says, nodding encouragingly at Michael. He glances up at the huge wooden structure behind them, eyeing it scrutinizingly, but Ranboo can see through the facade. The particles can, as well, calling him things like *traitor* and *dangerous* . Foolish keeps glancing back down at Michael. “The mansion still treating you well?”

“Very well,” Ranboo confirms. It’s true- the mansion is treating them well. But he really, really doesn’t like this situation as a whole, and he wants Foolish gone as soon as possible. “Did you. Uh. Need something?”

“No, no, I was just stopping by.” Foolish smiles again. His communicator buzzes, and he glances down to check it. “I’ll just head on my way now- it was nice seeing you, Ranboo! And you too, Michael.” Michael waves as Foolish wanders off, and Ranboo remains standing by the doorway for a moment. Yeah, he definitely needs to find Tommy. Something is very, very wrong.

“Come on,” Ranboo murmurs, striding away from the house, in the opposite direction of Foolish. “We’re gonna go hang out with Uncle Tommy.”

“Tommy, Tommy, Tommy,” Michael babbles, pulling at Ranboo’s hair. Ranboo pulls out his communicator and types with one hand as he walks, keeping an eye on his son at the same time.

You whispered to TommyInnit: hey where are you? something’s wrong

You whispered to Tubbo_: are you okay?

Ranboo frowns down at his messages with Tubbo, the last one having been sent a good few days ago, since they’ve been together since then. Normally Tubbo responds to his messages instantly, and he does the same- that’s just how they are. But as he walks, he gives it a few minutes, and there’s nothing. He does get a message from Tommy, thankfully.

TommyInnit whispered to you: meet you at my place

Ranboo sighs and makes his way toward the more populated area of the world, continuing to keep his hold on Michael even as the kid squirms and tries to be put down. He goes to the hotel, because when he’s not in Snowchester or wandering around, that’s normally where Tommy is. Indeed, he’s waiting outside, arguing with Jack Manifold. Ranboo rolls his eyes and coughs loudly as he approaches.

“Hello Ran-boo,” Tommy says loudly, spinning around. His eyes light up when he sees Michael. “You’ve brought the gremlin child!” Tommy holds out his arms, making grabby hands.

“My son is not a gremlin,” Ranboo says, but he acquiesces and hands Michael over. Michael wraps his arms around Tommy’s neck and babbles something incoherent to Jack Manifold, who just sighs and goes back into the hotel. “Thanks for being here- have you seen Tubbo?”

Tommy shakes his head, frowning a bit. “Why? You said something was wrong-”

“He went to meet Quackity,” Ranboo says. “On the old L’Manberg grounds. That was an hour ago, and he hasn’t responded to my comm, and he *always* responds to my comms-”

“Slow down, big man,” Tommy says gently. “Breathe.” He breathes slowly, and goddamn therapy, actually teaching him useful tricks to be used on his friends. Ranboo breathes with him and it calms his racing heart a little bit, but not by much. “There you go. You said he went to meet Quackity?”

“Yeah,” Ranboo confirms. “He said it was going to be a quick meeting, but I didn’t see him anywhere near L’Manberg on the way here, or-”

“Don’t worry,” Tommy says comfortingly. “We’re gonna go find him, and everything’s going to be peachy, yeah? Let’s go find Sam, or something, I don’t really want to talk to Quackity.”

Ranboo laughs. He doesn’t particularly want to talk to Quackity either, and he really doesn’t want to confront Sam, but if it means finding out where the hell Tubbo is, he’ll deal. Tommy leads the way to the prison, still holding Michael in his grip. Ranboo walks slightly behind them, and Michael waves to him.

“Sam!” Tommy yells as they make their way inside Pandora’s Vault. Ranboo is apprehensive, but he reminds himself that this is for Tubbo, that Tommy and Michael are both right there and nothing is going to happen to him. “Oi, Sam!”

“What do you want, Tommy?” comes Sam’s tired voice from behind them. Ranboo and Tommy both whirl around- Sam’s in full enchanted netherite, like he always is, and his sword is sheathed. Michael squirms in Tommy’s grip, and Ranboo reaches out for him instinctively. Tommy sets him down, and he slams into Ranboo’s legs. Ranboo watches the way Sam stares at him, and he picks his son up carefully. Tommy discreetly steps in front of them.

“We heard Tubbo was meeting with Quackity,” Tommy says, and Ranboo notes the immediate shift in Sam’s demeanor. “You’re friends with Quackity, right?”

“I am,” Sam admits, and he looks uncomfortable, and Ranboo *knows* that something is wrong, it wasn’t just a feeling of Offness, something is deeply wrong and Sam knows what it is. “I was at the meeting.”

“Good, then,” Tommy says. “Why hasn’t Tubbo responded to his comm messages?”

“I don’t know, Tommy,” Sam says. “Do I look like I know everything that goes on inside Tubbo’s head?” He looks impatient, but still uncomfortable. Ranboo can feel the ender particles around him getting more desperate for his attention. *He knows something.*

“Sam,” Ranboo says slowly, his voice low. “Where is Tubbo.” He doesn’t phrase it like a question, because it’s not a question, Sam *knows* -

“Quackity thought it would be best to put him in the prison,” Sam says, his shoulders sagging, and Ranboo’s eyes widen. Tommy glances back at the portal behind them, then back to Sam. Ranboo can tell he’s about to explode.

“Quackity thought fucking *what* ?” Tommy says. “And you *agreed* to it?”

“I didn’t want to,” Sam says. “But Quackity said he had nukes, and I- I keep the greatest threats to the world locked up. That’s my job.”

“You’re kidding me,” Ranboo says. He doesn’t know what to feel- disgust, anger, fear, hatred. He settles on pure, blinding rage. The ender particles scream around him, and he tunes them out. “You’ve gotta be kidding me, Sam-”

Ranboo and Tommy don’t have armor or weapons on them, and Ranboo still has his son in his arms, but that’s still not enough to stop him from taking a step forward. There must be something in his eyes, because Sam, who’s still completely armored and fully stacked with weapons, takes a step back.

“I’m sorry,” Sam says, and his voice holds steady. “But there was nothing I could do. I’m sure if he tells Quackity where the nuclear weapons are, Quackity will let him go.”

And Ranboo knows that Tubbo won’t tell Quackity, not in a million years. Based on the look Tommy sends his way, he knows it, too. Ranboo’s about to say something else, and Michael tugs on his hair. It’s enough to ground him, to not let him get completely lost in fury, and he takes a few deep breaths. Tommy would be proud, if Tommy didn’t currently look like he wanted to stick a sword between Sam’s eyes.

“Fine,” Tommy says stiffly. “Thank you for the information, Sam.” He turns back to Ranboo and jerks his head, and they make their way out of the Vault. Sam stands still, watching them go.

“Papa?” Michael asks Ranboo softly, and he nearly hands his child off to Tommy so he can turn around and punch Sam in the face. He’s normally not a violent person, but right now, he’s reconsidering his stance on that.

No. He can’t lose himself to violence. He needs to focus on getting Tubbo out of there. He picks up his pace so that he surpasses Tommy, and Tommy jogs to catch up to him.

“What are we thinking, big man?” Tommy asks, and Ranboo glances back at him.

“Have you been to the Syndicate?”

Ten minutes later finds them standing outside Phil’s house, a message sent to both him and Niki asking to meet. Ranboo can see through the window that they’re both already inside, laughing in the kitchen, and he pounds on the door. Michael is already squirming excitedly, knowing exactly what visits to the Arctic mean.

The door is thrown open, Phil still grinning over his shoulder at Niki.

“What’s going-”

He stops when he sees Tommy, standing behind Ranboo and shivering slightly. He remains frozen for a moment, long enough that Niki comes to the door to see what’s going on. She frowns slightly, pushing Phil to the side.

“Come in, you must be freezing,” she says, reaching out to take Michael from Ranboo’s arms. He babbles excitedly at her, and she smiles down at him. There’s a sad look in her eyes when she looks back at Ranboo and Tommy, like she knows that something is wrong.

“Yeah,” Phil says, shaking his head. “Come in, you said it was an emergency-”

“It is,” Ranboo says. Tommy and Phil are still looking at each other, odd expressions on both of their faces. “But nothing’s going to get solved if you guys have this weird father-son tension between you-”

They both snap out of it at the same time, shaking their heads the same way, and Niki giggles as she sits down on the couch with Michael.

“Right,” Phil says. He holds out a hand to Tommy. “No hard feelings, mate.”

"I hate you," Tommy replies, but his tone clearly indicates that he's lying. Ranboo sighs. That's a problem for another time.

"What's the issue, Ranboo?" Niki asks. "Where's Tubbo? If Tommy's here-"

"That's the problem," Ranboo says quickly. "Quackity and Sam put Tubbo in the prison. And I know we were already working on breaking Technoblade out-"

"You were what?" Tommy hisses.

"-so I was just. Coming to say that we're working together now. With Tommy."

"Oh, great," Tommy says. "Thank you for speaking for me, big man-"

"Because, you know," Ranboo finishes, ignoring Tommy. "Quackity taking innocent civilians off the street and imprisoning them sounds pretty tyrannical to me. I think Techno would want us to break them out. And maybe. I dunno. Get revenge, or something."

He's not a big revenge person, but he's starting to think that he wants to see *Quackity* in the prison, just for a bit. Clearly, based on the way Tommy's bristling energy is just getting worse, he feels the same.

"I think that sounds like an excellent idea," Niki says. "A prison break certainly sounds deserved, and Tommy is more than welcome to join us. Phil?"

"You know I want Techno out more than anything," Phil nods. "If that means getting Tubbo out, too- welcome to the Syndicate, Tommy."

"Thanks," Tommy says sarcastically. "I'm just here to help break Tubbo out. I'm not sticking around." He looks doubtful even as he says it, but Ranboo knows they're going to need more people for the break-out to be successful. Clearly, Niki is thinking the same thing.

"We need other allies if this is going to work," she says, setting Michael down and standing up. "Las Nevadas is powerful. And so are we, but we number only four." She gives Phil a pointed

look; she doesn't want to say it, but Ranboo knows what she's thinking.

"I think I know a guy," Phil says, a smirk quickly spreading on his face.

"Oh, no," Tommy mutters. He looks at Ranboo. "Here we go."

sometimes the short end of the stick is the sharpest

Chapter Notes

chapter title from "sometimes" by nick lutsko

Dream is asleep.

Tubbo doesn't know how long he's been in the prison- half a day, maybe- but Dream has bundled up Techno's cloak and is using it as a pillow. He looked at Techno before he laid down, questioningly, and Techno had nodded. Tubbo had watched the whole exchange curiously.

Dream sleeps pressed up against the lectern, back facing the wall, in a position where he could easily be on his feet in seconds. Tubbo doesn't blame him; if Quackity's been showing up and torturing him, he'd probably want to be able to be awake in a heartbeat.

Technoblade is leaning up against one wall, Tubbo against the opposite. They're both fairly close to the lava- Tubbo doesn't know what Techno is thinking, but he's thinking that if the lava drops, he wants to know right away. He can't hear insanely well out of his right ear, the scarred side of his head, and he's considering asking Techno to switch sides with him. Techno speaks before he can even open his mouth.

"Dream's asleep," he says, and Tubbo snorts.

"I can see that." His eyes both work, even if one of them is surrounded by scars. Techno shrugs.

"We can talk now." *Without Dream figuring out our weaknesses* is left unspoken. "You built the nukes to protect Ranboo and Michael?"

Tubbo doesn't like hearing his son's name come out of Technoblade's mouth. The Syndicate knows about Snowchester, and he knows about the Syndicate; Ranboo could never keep his families hidden from each other for long. Boo's brought their son to the Syndicate multiple times, when Tubbo was working and Tommy was busy and they don't really trust anyone else to babysit. So, yeah, the Syndicate knows about Michael, from what Tubbo's heard they *love* Michael, but that doesn't mean he has to be happy about it.

Not that he hates the Syndicate- he's on perfectly fine terms with Niki, she was like a sister to him before they were drawn apart by conflict after conflict. He certainly doesn't hate Phil, he just doesn't know what Phil thinks of him. And, as much as he hates to admit it, he's just plain scared of Technoblade.

"Yes," Tubbo says when he realizes Techno is still waiting for an answer. He counters with a question of his own. "You didn't tell Dream about the Syndicate?"

Techno shakes his head, eyeing the man in question warily. "He asked. Wanted to know who I was hanging around with. I didn't like the tone of his voice."

So Dream hasn't really changed, then. Still seeking out attachments, finding people's weaknesses, even someone who's a supposed ally. Good to know. Also good to know is the fact that Techno considers Phil, Niki, and Ranboo attachments, enough to the point that he won't risk Dream finding out about them. As for Tubbo- Dream already knows about Tommy. Tubbo won't let him know about Snowchester.

Because Tubbo knows how to keep his mouth shut. Schlatt taught him that lesson well. And Tubbo may be a little afraid of Technoblade, but he's not scared of Dream. He's done too much, *grown* too much, to really be afraid of the masked man. He marched willingly to his death once at Dream's hand, and he's not planning on doing it again.

So he still sees Dream as an enemy, but not one to be afraid of. He's thinking he's going to need to see Dream as an ally, at least for a little bit, because he's getting out of here. It's been half a day at most, and he's already bored.

"Say, Technoblade," he says. "You've been here for a while. Got any escape plans?"

Technoblade snorts. "We think there's an elder guardian right below us, but we've been trying to break out through the toilet." Disgusting, Tubbo thinks. There's bound to be better plans than that. "Got interrupted, though." He gives Tubbo a look- his arrival is what interrupted them, then. Tubbo shrugs. Nothing he can do about it.

"And you said you summoned God to get you the bell?"

"Yeah," Techno says. "What's with all the questions?"

Tubbo stands up, turns to face the lava. His mind is racing. If it weren't for the lava between him and the rest of the prison, he could easily figure out how the redstone works, probably find a way to rig the platform over to them. Unfortunately, the lava continues falling at a steady pace. He frowns at it for a moment, then turns back to Technoblade.

"We're getting out of here, Techno. Wasn't that obvious?"

Techno snorts. "If you want to start breaking through the obsidian under the toilet water, be my guest." He gestures toward the disgusting water. Tubbo wrinkles his nose.

"Come on, Technoblade," Tubbo says. "You summoned *God*. What's to say you can't do it again?"

"First of all, I didn't summon God, Dream did," Techno says. "And we tried doing it a second time. It didn't work. God only showed up once."

"So how did it happen, then?" Tubbo demands, because he doesn't actually know, he's just banking on the fact that things are different now- there are three of them, not two.

"Dream used the revive book on me," Techno explains. "Or at least, *a* revive book. I haven't lost any lives-" He cuts himself off. Tubbo remembers an anvil dropping, skin knitting itself back together. Techno corrects himself. "I still have all three lives, so there wasn't anything to revive. When he used it on me, God appeared. Looked kinda similar to Dream, too, actually, it was weird. But he told us we had one wish, so I got the bell."

"Wow," Tubbo says. "That was really fucking stupid of you."

Techno laughs, harsh and genuine. "Sell-out timer," he tells Tubbo. "Chat goes crazy for it. Trust me, it was worth it."

Tubbo chooses not to comment on any of that. Not that he would know how to, anyways. Ranboo's told him about the ender particles, Phil's crows, Techno's voices. Sometimes Tubbo thinks the bees talk to him. He never thinks too much on it. "So you tried again, and it didn't work?"

“No,” Techno confirms. “It didn’t work. And Dream wouldn’t let me try it on him.”

“So we’ll have him try it on me, then,” Tubbo shrugs. “And we’ll get God in here, and I’ll wish for us to get out.”

“All of us?” Technoblade asks doubtfully. He looks over at Dream, then back to Tubbo. “Like you said. We’ve both tried to kill you. I succeeded.”

Tubbo’s hand trails up toward the scars on his face, the ones that run down the entire right side of his body. He grimaces.

“Well, I don’t think Ranboo would be very pleased if I had an opportunity to get you out and didn’t take it,” he says, because it’s true. He knows the Syndicate’s been planning a break-out since Techno was imprisoned. “We’ll have to see about Dream.” Because he doubts Tommy would forgive him if he let Dream out, but they might not have a choice.

Dream sleeps for what must be twelve hours. Tubbo starts to feel his eyes drooping, but he definitely doesn’t trust anything about this situation enough to sleep. Still, he can feel himself starting to slip against his will, to the point that Techno sighs.

“You can sleep,” he says. “I won’t let Dream hurt you.”

“Doubtful,” Tubbo snorts, but he lays down close to the lava and lets the humming of it lull him to sleep.

When he wakes up, there’s a heavy cloak draped over him. Techno and Dream are in the corner by the lectern, muttering to each other. Tubbo sits up, eyes them carefully, and they stop talking when they realize he’s awake.

“How long was I out?” he asks.

“Hour or two,” Techno says. “It’s been a day, maybe. You ready to summon God?”

Alright, he thinks, shrugging the cloak off of him. Techno strides over and picks it up, swinging it

back over his shoulders in one fluid movement. He holds out a hand to help Tubbo up, and Tubbo considers for a long moment before taking it. Dream pulls a book out of the chest in the corner and clears his throat.

“You wish for all of us to get out of here, yeah?” he says to Tubbo, and Tubbo nods firmly. He’ll deal with the consequences later. “Stand by the lava, then.”

Tubbo does as he’s told, follows Dream’s directions until he’s throwing the book into the lava.

“Alright,” Techno says. “He should be showing up around...”

And Tubbo drops to his knees. It feels like part of his soul is trying to rip itself out of his chest, like his entire brain is being torn into pieces. There’s a weight on his chest and it isn’t going away, his heart is practically beating out of his skin, and then there’s nothing. For one blessed moment, there’s nothing.

“-bo?” Techno’s voice says, and Tubbo didn’t even realize his ears were ringing. “Tubbo, can you hear me?”

“Yeah,” he gasps out. “Yeah, I can-”

And then it hits again and he buckles over, and this time it feels like he’s being put back together, stitched up, and he can feel *life* in every crevice of his body, every part of his soul, his whole being is screaming out in joy and then it’s over as quickly as it began.

“Holy *fuck*,” he spits out, and he looks up. Dream and Techno are both standing in the same places they had been before, staring at him with wide eyes.

“What just happened?” Techno asks, looking at Dream. Dream shakes his head.

“I think,” Tubbo says. “That I just got a life back.”

“Oh my God,” Dream mutters, looking down at his hands and then back up at Tubbo. “It would make sense-”

“Yeah,” Techno agrees. “Do it again. Give him all three. Then we can get God in here.”

“No-” Tubbo says quickly. “Don’t you dare do that to me again.”

“Was it painful?” Dream asks, almost eagerly, and Tubbo sits back on his heels, gives Dream a look. “Worse than dying?”

“Yeah,” Tubbo says, because it was, it was more painful than the fireworks and the stabbing and whatever the hell else he’s gone through. “So I’d really like if you didn’t-”

“Guys,” Techno says sharply. “The lava.”

Tubbo pulls himself to his feet and looks over to the lava- it’s dropping. The three of them back up and the netherite bars raise. Quackity and Sam appear in their field of vision a moment later, and they both look surprised, their gazes focused on Tubbo. He shifts uncomfortably under the attention. The platform begins moving, and Quackity calls out.

“Didn’t think you’d still be alive, Tubbo,” he calls tantalizingly. “Thought they’d have killed you by now. Why didn’t you guys, huh? Are you letting him squirm?”

“What do you want, Quackity?” Technoblade replies in lieu of an answer. He shifts slightly so that he’s standing ahead of both Tubbo and Dream, his stance protective. It reminds Tubbo of Tommy. Maybe Phil taught them both. Maybe Tommy learned it from Techno. Either way, it doesn’t seem to scare Quackity. He steps off the platform and just stares at the three of them, keeping the netherite up.

“Where’d you get the bell?” he asks, jerking his head in its direction. “You know what, it doesn’t matter, there’s nothing you can do with it. Hey, Dream, how’s it going?” Tubbo doesn’t take his eyes off of Quackity, but he can hear the way Dream lets out a sharp breath, can see him recoil out of the corner of his eye.

“What do you *want*, Quackity?” Technoblade repeats forcefully. Quackity laughs.

“I just wanted to see Tubbo’s body,” he says, and God, Tubbo hates him, he fucking hates him.

“Let people know he’d lost his last life.” Tubbo swears, if anything happens to his family, there’ll be so much hell to pay- “But I guess I’ll have to wait a little bit longer.”

He steps back onto the platform, and it begins moving backward. “And we’ll still be feeding you for one, so have fun with that, boys.” He stares at them as he moves backward, and Tubbo notes with distinct pride that even with everything between them, Quackity doesn’t turn his back on the three greatest threats to the world. He’s *afraid* .

The lava drops. Quackity never turns his back.

Arctic Anarchist Commune on the Dream Team SMP (Video Blogging RPF)

Tommy is not having a very good day.

Tubbo has been in the prison for twenty-four hours now, and Ranboo's pacing is beginning to drive Tommy up the wall. Michael has asked for Tubbo at least six times now, and it's breaking all their hearts not to be able to give the kid what he wants. Niki is a right mess at the implication that Wilbur is going to be arriving within a few minutes to help begin planning. Phil's stressed about the situation as a whole, and it's beginning to show.

Overall, Tommy thinks, it could be worse.

Niki is in the kitchen, stress-baking like her life depends on it. There are six loaves of bread on the counter, and it was around the third that she bullied Ranboo into helping her, to take his mind off things. Phil is laying down on the couch, Michael taking a nap on his chest. And Tommy is staring out the window, waiting for Wilbur to appear through the snow.

And appear he does, trench coat swirling around him in the wind, hair blown back. He grins when he sees Tommy watching out the window, starts walking faster.

"He's here," Tommy announces, turning back slightly. Phil sits up, waking Michael. Niki and Ranboo both stop what they're doing. Tommy throws the door open, and Wilbur strides inside.

"Hello," he announces, smile wide. "You called?"

They've talked about it- it's the first time Niki's going to actually be seeing Wilbur since his death, it's Ranboo's second time officially meeting him, and Phil... Phil seemed pleased at the idea of dragging Wilbur into this, but now he doesn't look so sure. Tommy, of course, has been hanging around Wilbur since he got back, even though he's had his doubts about the guy. Wilbur's talked too fondly of Dream for Tommy to really trust him.

"Hey, Wil," Phil says. Wilbur's eyes narrow in on Michael, and Tommy can already tell that's going to be a problem. Ranboo remains standing in the kitchen, watching apprehensively, and Niki strides forward.

"Niki!" Wilbur says gleefully, arms open like he's expecting a hug. Instead, Niki pulls her fist back

and punches him hard in the gut. He doubles over, and she punches him again, this time in the face. “What the hell was that for?” he asks. Niki glares at him.

“L’Manberg,” she snarls. “Your *unfinished symphony* .”

Tommy thinks it’s rather deserved. He’s not going to say that, though.

“Alright,” Wilbur says. “I missed you too, Niki.” She huffs and marches back toward the kitchen, scooping Michael off Phil’s lap on the way. Wilbur watches her go, and then lets his eyes fall on Phil. Phil stands, opening his arms like Wilbur had just done, and Tommy watches as the two embrace.

“Good to see you, mate,” Phil says, patting him on the back. “Welcome to the Syndicate.”

“Thank you for having me,” Wilbur says coolly, rubbing at the side of his face. He turns back to Tommy, and Tommy does not like the look in his eyes. “Didn’t know you were part of this.”

“I’m not,” Tommy says quickly. “I’m just here to help.”

“Ah, yes,” Wilbur says, sitting down on the couch next to Phil. Tommy takes a seat in an armchair, and Ranboo moves to stand behind him, Michael now firmly in his grip. “Breaking the prisoners out. A splendid idea, really, I’ve been meaning to get on that- but first.”

He looks slightly above Tommy’s head, and Tommy knows Ranboo is looking away.

“Ranboo, right?” Wilbur asks. “Who’s the kid?”

“It’s my kid,” Ranboo replies. Tommy turns around in his seat and makes grabby hands at his nephew. He knows Michael isn’t *technically* his nephew, but Tubbo’s taught the gremlin to call him Uncle Tommy, so he’s allowed to think of the kid however he wants. Ranboo passes Michael down into his arms, and Tommy holds him protectively.

“Say hello to Wilbur, Michael,” he says gruffly. Michael blinks sleepily and waves in Wilbur’s direction.

“You’re old enough to have a kid?” Wilbur asks curiously. Phil coughs something that sounds like *Fundy* .

“No,” Ranboo answers, and doesn’t offer much more of an explanation. “He’s adopted.”

“Clearly,” Wilbur snorts. “Just you?”

“It’s Tubbo’s kid, too,” Tommy says, and Michael perks up at his other father’s name.

“Tubbo has a kid?” Wilbur says, and Tommy really, really doesn’t like how pleased he looks at this information. He holds Michael a bit tighter.

“That’s not the important part,” Niki says before the questioning can go any further. She moves to stand by the door, so they’re all looking at her. Tommy thinks that power suits her well- better than anyone else, at least. “The important part is that Tubbo and Technoblade are currently locked in prison, and only Quackity had a say in it.”

“So we’re breaking all three of them out,” Wilbur says, clapping his hands together. “Brilliant.”

“That’s the thing, mate,” Phil says. “We don’t know if we can break Dream out or not. We don’t know where Techno and Tubbo are being kept, if they’re in the maximum security cell or not. Tommy said there were other cells, right?”

“A whole row of ‘em,” Tommy confirms. “And there’s the fact that I do not *want* to break Dream out.”

“Well, I do,” Wilbur says. “He’s helped me more than I could say. So if you want my help, we’re getting Dream out, too.”

Tommy looks to Phil, then Niki.

“If we’re getting the others, we might as well get him, too,” Phil shrugs. “What’s he going to do,

come after us?”

“*Yes*,” Tommy stresses. “He is going to try and kill me and Tubbo. Again. If he hasn’t killed Tubbo already.”

“He hasn’t,” Ranboo says, and Tommy glances back. Ranboo is shaking his head furiously. “We would’ve known if he had, Quackity would be spreading that information all over.” Tommy can’t help but think Ranboo means something else, that they would’ve been able to feel it, like fireworks to the face or an arrow to the gut or a sword in the back.

And Tommy knows Phil wants to say something like that’s not his problem, Tommy and Tubbo aren’t his issue and have never really been his issue, but Niki is giving him a strong look.

“If Dream wants to come after you, you’ll be under the protection of the Syndicate,” she announces. “Dream’s no match for Technoblade, especially after being in prison for six months and with the rest of us by Techno’s side. You’ll be safe, Tommy.”

And Tommy has never been more grateful for the fact that Niki’s protective by nature, like the rest of them, and she’s chosen the kids to be protective of. And sure, she wanted to kill him that one time (of course he knows about that, he’s not stupid, he knows she and Jack blamed him for all their problems and that was fair of them, really), but before that she was like an older sister to him, and he’s glad she’s gone back to that attitude.

As for Phil- Tommy’s not his son, as much as they pretend that he is, as much as Tommy looks up to Phil as a father figure the way he looks up to Wilbur as a brother. Tommy’s never been his son, and Tubbo less so, but Phil’s got a soft spot for kids and a soft spot for Ranboo in particular, and Ranboo is looking at Phil like if he says no, he’ll never be forgiven.

“Yeah,” Phil sighs. “We’ll keep you away from Dream.”

“There,” Wilbur says. “That wasn’t so hard, was it?” No one responds to him. “So what’s the break-out plan? Do we have anyone else on our side?”

“Not if we’re breaking Dream out, too,” Tommy says, shaking his head. “The popular opinion of him hasn’t really gotten any better.”

“So we don’t tell them we’re going after Dream,” Phil shrugs. “We say it’s for Tubbo and Technoblade, who were both wrongfully imprisoned. Would anyone help us then?”

“No one from Las Nevadas,” Ranboo says. “They hate Tubbo, I think.”

“Eret, maybe,” Niki says. Tommy and Wilbur both make a face at the same time, which only Phil seems to notice with a small chuckle.

“Tubbo likes Jack,” Ranboo offers.

“Jack won’t help if I’m involved, he fucking hates me,” Tommy says, shaking his head. Because of course he does, of course Jack is trying to kill him, why wouldn’t he be? Tommy’s been nothing but a dick to him, really, so it makes sense. And Tommy’s not as naive as he looks or acts- he’s been to Hell, he’s been revived, he’s got that damn streak of white in his hair to prove it. He knows that he’s been kind of a dick to Jack, but he’s not going to change his behavior now. He’s been kind of a dick to a lot of people, but...

“Puffy,” he says suddenly. “She’s taken that oath to protect all the youngins, right? She’ll help us.”

Niki brightens at the mention of Puffy’s name. Wilbur just looks confused.

“Can we trust her?” Phil asks. “Isn’t she Dream’s...”

“Well, yeah,” Tommy says. “But that would just make her more inclined to help us, wouldn’t it?”

“I’m a bit lost,” Wilbur announces. Niki rolls her eyes. “Who’s Puffy?”

“Dream’s mum,” Phil says instantly. “Runs a therapy office, very protective of the kids, aren’t you dating her, Niki?”

“Er,” Niki says, face going red.

“She’s a damn good therapist, too,” Tommy interrupts before it can get any more awkward. “She’ll

help us, if we ask.”

“Perfect, I’ll message her,” Niki says quickly, slipping out the door. Wilbur watches her go curiously. Michael squirms in Tommy’s grip, so he sets the kid down and watches him rush back toward Ranboo, clinging to his legs. Ranboo scoops him up and mutters something in a language that Tommy doesn’t know. Michael responds by bopping his forehead against Ranboo’s. It’s incredibly domestic.

“Disgusting,” Tommy scoffs, and Ranboo huffs out a laugh.

“Puffy’s on her way,” Niki says, slipping back inside. “She’s not thrilled about Dream, but she’ll help us. She thinks you need therapy, Wilbur.”

“That’s probably true,” Wilbur says. Tommy’s rather proud of the two of them- they don’t glare at each other during the exchange.

“Great,” Phil says. “Do we want to start mapping out the prison, then? That seems like a good place to start.”

Puffy arrives when they’re halfway through their rough drawing of the map, greeting them all carefully. She introduces herself to Wilbur as the Captain, and he watches her curiously.

“What’s your opinion on Dream?” he asks bluntly at one point, and Puffy’s gaze darkens.

“I want nothing to do with him,” she replies coldly. “But if breaking him out means bringing justice- getting Tubbo and Techno out- then I’ll break him out.”

Wilbur nods, satisfied. Tommy watches his brother curiously, and comes to a decision.

He’s not going to let Dream get out. Not even if he and Tubbo and Ranboo are under the Syndicate’s protection. Dream is too much of a threat, too many people hate him- and if Dream does get out, well. Tommy knows who to call. After all, Sapnap still isn’t too pleased with Dream, not after everything.

“Alright,” Tommy says. “Let’s get back to work.”

Hold on, Tubbo, he thinks. We’re coming.

close your eyes and count to ten, they'll have me on the pyre by then

Chapter Notes

chapter title from "for the departed" by shayfer james

Being fed for one is not pleasant. Tubbo knows how to ration- he went through the war for independence, he hid in Pogtopia during the second war, he went hungry during his presidency when Dream raised the walls around his nation. He knows what it's like to survive on scraps of food. That doesn't mean he enjoys it.

It's only been two days, and they've been fed one time. Dream reluctantly shared with them a few of the potatoes he'd been hoarding, so they each have a small supply of food that they're saving for when they really need it. Tubbo isn't necessarily pleased that the only thing they're being fed is potatoes- too many memories of sleepless nights in dark caverns, attempting to make redstone machines work across caved-in farms- but he'll deal with it. He's dealt with worse.

Dream has only brought up giving Tubbo more lives once, when he pointed out to them that they have a limited stash of books, and each revive attempt costs a book. Tubbo agreed that saving them for when they were needed was a smarter option than using them all up now.

"But consider this," Techno had pointed out. "We give Tubbo one more life, and then we get a wish from God."

"That's using two books," Dream had argued. "And I only have seven left. What if Quackity comes in here and decides to kill one of us? I need to be able to bring you guys back."

It's the most determined and scared that Tubbo's ever heard Dream, and he was present for the final disc confrontation. He's confused, at first, as to why Dream *cares* about it so much. He's always been under the assumption that Dream and Techno are tentative allies, if not rivals, and of course Dream's never been anything but unkind to Tubbo. Then he realizes that Dream was alone in here for six months; he doesn't want to be alone again.

Tubbo gets it. That feeling of loneliness. He doesn't think anyone deserves that, not even Dream. There comes a point where imprisonment turns into something inhumane, and even if Dream deserved to be locked up, if he got what was coming to him, Tubbo doesn't think he deserves this.

And “this” is refusing to sleep unless Techno promises to be awake. “This” is telling Tubbo stories from the past six months, of what Quackity did to him, of how Sam just lets it happen. Tubbo’s been through beatings, he survived Schlatt’s cabinet, and the fact that Quackity’s turned around to abuse his power just like Schlatt had- it disgusts him.

So he comes to an internal decision, while Techno is asleep and Dream is scribbling in a book in the corner, that when his friends come to break him out (if his friends come to break him out, but he knows they will), he’ll insist on taking Dream with them. He doesn’t know what they’ll do with the man, but anything is better than Pandora’s Vault. Tubbo is nothing if not forgiving; it’s because he has to be. He was trained to be. The world has no forgiveness, and to Hell with him if Tubbo’s going to let himself be anything like the world.

Quackity visits again the next day. They know he’s coming because this time he yells through the lava to them, lets them know he’s there. It’s just a greeting, but it has Dream pressing himself up against the wall and Techno sighing as he stands. Tubbo keeps his back pressed against the cauldron, facing the lava, legs crossed. He’s bored, mostly. He’ll keep that facade of boredom up, just to annoy Quackity.

The lava drops slowly, the netherite bars raise, and they see Quackity standing on the other side. He’s wearing an exact replica of what he’d been wearing the day before, same beanie, same shirt, same suspenders, same loose tie. Sam is standing off to the side, netherite armor gleaming, and the platform begins moving.

“Tubbo!” Quackity cries gleefully. “You’re still alive! Thank God, because I’ve got use for you.”

He steps off the platform, and Sam lowers the netherite blocks. The platform drifts back over to the other side, leaving them no chance of escape. Quackity produces three small glass bottles- potions. Based on the stench, they’re weakness. Tubbo wrinkles his nose.

“Gentlemen,” Quackity says in greeting, nodding to Dream and Techno in turn. Tubbo doesn’t miss the shears hanging from his belt, the axe, the sword. “I’m going to give each of you a potion, yeah? And you’re going to drink it. And if you don’t, you’ll lose a finger. How’s that sound?”

“I don’t really want to lose a finger,” Techno huffs, catching the bottle that Quackity tosses him. He downs it quickly, shivering as it goes, then moves to lean against the wall. He’s looking at Quackity like he wants to give the man a matching scar on the other side of his face. Tubbo doesn’t blame him.

“Dream?” Quackity says, approaching slowly. Dream reaches out for the potion. “Good job, bud.”

“Don’t fucking talk to him like that,” Tubbo snarls, and Quackity whirls on him. “He’s not a dog.”

“I don’t think I remember asking you, Tubbo,” Quackity says threateningly. It’s not enough to make Tubbo pull back; he just narrows his eyes. A challenge. “It’s okay, though. I was here for you anyways. You gonna drink the potion, or you gonna give me a finger?”

“Just give me the damn potion,” Tubbo says, and Quackity hands it over.

Tubbo smashes it on the ground.

“You don’t scare me,” he sneers, and Quackity’s face remains expressionless for one second, two, three-

“You’re gonna regret that,” he says, and then he’s diving forward, grabbing Tubbo by the horns and dragging him out from his spot. Tubbo cries out, mostly in shock, and Techno takes a step forward. “Nuh-uh, Technoblade!” Quackity says, drawing the shears and pointing them at him. “I told you what would happen, Tubbo! But you just *had* to go and-”

“Are you gonna take my fucking finger or not?” Tubbo snarls from the floor, and Quackity’s gaze darkens.

A fair amount of screaming, struggling, and blood later, Tubbo lets his head hit the ground as he cradles a soaked hand to his chest. Quackity took a pinky, which isn’t the end of the world, but it hurt like a bitch. Dream is curled up in the corner, hands covering his ears, and Techno looks like he wants to pummel Quackity into next week.

“There,” Quackity huffs, sitting back. “That wasn’t so bad, was it?”

“You’re the worst kind of person,” Techno tells him, and his eyes are red with fury. Tubbo thinks he’s being overly dramatic for the guy who caved to peer pressure and shot a sixteen-year-old with a rocket launcher. Twice.

“Maybe,” Quackity says. “But I know how to get what I want.”

He stands up; his clothes are covered in splatters of blood. Tubbo glares up at him.

“Hey, Tubbo,” he says. “Where are the nukes?”

“Like hell I’d tell you,” Tubbo replies. Quackity shrugs.

“Have it your way.”

After twenty minutes, a lot of yelling, and even more blood, Tubbo’s laying in a different spot on the ground, absolutely drenched in blood, every part of his body completely on fire. Techno took a step forward at one point, and Quackity drove his sword down so hard into Tubbo’s arm that he hit bone. The only reason he’s stopped now is because Dream’s finally yelled at him, too.

“Oh,” Quackity says. “Dream, does this... bother you? Are you upset right now? Upset enough to bring Tubbo back to life if I kill him? He only has one life left, you know. Would you bring him back?”

Dream doesn’t dignify him with a response. Tubbo coughs, and he can feel blood bubbling at his lips. Quackity looks down at him and sneers.

“I’ve got healing potions, Tubbo,” he says. “Last chance. Tell me where the nukes are, and I won’t send you to Hell.”

“Fuck you,” Tubbo spits out, and Quackity drives his sword straight into Tubbo’s gut.

Everything goes dark.

And then it’s light again. He has no idea how much time has passed, but it barely feels like an instant. Tubbo gasps back to life painfully, his skin knitting itself together, his finger regrowing, his blood pumping again. Quackity is staring down at him in horror and it takes him a moment to register that he’s screaming. Once he does, he clamps his mouth down firmly, biting his tongue so hard he tastes blood again. His gut is aching where Quackity stabbed him. Technoblade is laughing.

“How?” Quackity demands. “Do you have more than one life? Do you-” His head swivels toward Dream. “You tried to give him more lives, didn’t you? And it worked. How many did you give him? How many do I take until he dies permanently?”

“I only gave him one,” Dream says quietly. “If you kill him again, that’s it.”

“Fine,” Quackity says. “Fine.” He looks down at Tubbo again. “Say hi to Schlatt for me.”

And then, with barely any time to recover, the sword is being dragged across his neck. He sputters for one moment, two, three, and then it’s dark.

Again.

This time there’s no returning to life immediately. This time, he’s lost his last life. This time, he’s in a void, and then he blinks, and he’s at... a train station.

Hell is a train station. Good to know.

He’s sitting on the ground, staring down at the tracks. He reaches one hand up to his throat; he can feel the scar material there.

“I’m the first person to lose four lives,” he says aloud, and his voice doesn’t scratch.

“Good for you,” a horrifyingly familiar voice says behind him.

Tubbo whirls around, and there he is, in all his glory- Schlatt. He’s got a bottle in one hand and a cigarette in the other, and he’s leaning up against a column and smirking.

“Didn’t think I’d be seeing you here so soon,” Schlatt says, and it takes everything Tubbo has not to rush forward and punch Schlatt in the face. “Who took the other two lives, then?”

“Quackity,” Tubbo says, looking off to the side. Schlatt raises an eyebrow; he has the audacity to look surprised.

“Quackity?” he says. “Really? So things have changed a lot, huh?”

“You could say that,” Tubbo mutters. He’s considering jumping onto the train tracks and wandering as far away from Schlatt as he can get, and then he hears another familiar voice.

“Schlatt, leave him alone.”

It’s Ghostbur. That’s Ghostbur, walking toward him, arms spread. Tubbo doesn’t hesitate before he lunges forward, hugging Ghostbur tightly, and Schlatt scoffs.

“Go back to your gym, or something,” Ghostbur says. Tubbo pulls back and turns to see Schlatt walking off. He turns back, eyes Tubbo carefully.

“Do good things, kid,” he says. “Make me proud.”

“Fuck you,” Tubbo tells him, and Schlatt laughs loud and clear. It turns into a hacking fit as he continues to walk away until he disappears. “Ghostbur-”

“I know,” Ghostbur says, smiling at him kindly.

“I’m so sorry,” Tubbo whispers.

“I am, too.”

They sit there for what feels like hours, neither of them talking, both just staring at the train tracks. Tubbo feels like he’s about to drift off to sleep when there are lights coming from the tunnel at the end of the station to their right.

“That one’s for you, I think,” Ghostbur says, smiling at Tubbo. Tubbo looks at him in bewilderment, then stands up. Sure enough, the train pulls into the station, comes to a stop in front

of them. The conductor opens his window, and there's Dream, in all his pre-prison glory.

"Hop on, Tubbo," he says. "Time to come back."

With one last look at Ghostbur, Tubbo climbs aboard. "I'll tell Tommy you say hi," he says, and Ghostbur smiles and nods. The door closes. The train takes off. He watches as they leave the station, enter another tunnel, and then-

-and then he's on the ground, gasping, hands reaching up to his throat. He can feel the dried blood coating it, and Quackity is gone, and Technoblade is staring down at him, clearly concerned.

"Hi," Tubbo chokes out, and this time his voice is raspy, and he rolls over and coughs out enough blood to fill his entire throat. Technoblade rubs his back, and when he's done he sits up, sits away from the mess. Dream is watching him, looking exhausted. Technoblade wraps his cloak around Tubbo's shoulders.

"You've got a," he says, gesturing to his hairline. Tubbo grabs a strand of hair and pulls it down in front of his eyes- it's white.

"Great," he mumbles. At least he's matching with Tommy now. "How long was I dead?"

"An hour, maybe," Dream answers. "I refused to bring you back while Quackity was still here."

Tubbo sees a thin line of red soaking through Dream's shirt, a tear across his chest. He grimaces.

"Quackity took the bell," Technoblade tells him, and Tubbo glances over. Indeed, the sellout timer is gone. "Sam said it was a hazard. He wanted to know how it got in here."

"Did you tell him?" Tubbo asks, and his voice still sounds awful. He rubs at his throat, and he can feel the scar tissue there, right where Quackity slit it.

"Yeah," Techno snorts. "Said God gave it to us."

“Quackity didn’t like that one very much,” Dream says, and he cracks a smile, and Techno laughs, and then they’re both laughing and Tubbo starts laughing, too, and for a moment it feels okay.

Then he starts coughing again, and Techno puts an arm around his shoulders, and the cell goes quiet.

Tubbo thinks of Ghostbur, and he tries not to cry.

but you rip it from my hands and you swear it's all gone

Chapter Notes

ch title from 'i gave you all' by mumford & sons

anyways bamf!niki my beloved

They know when something goes wrong by the way both Ranboo and Tommy freeze.

They've been making bombs, under the watchful eye of Phil, knowing that they'll come in handy at some point. Wilbur is a bit off to the side, having his fun with TNT. Phil is perched on the deck between the two houses, letting Michael swing around his limbs. Ranboo and Tommy are working together, and Niki pauses where she's working with Puffy when she sees them both tense up at the same time.

"What?" she asks, immediately looking around to see if someone is entering the Arctic area. Seeing no one, she looks back to the two. "Are you guys okay?"

"Something's wrong," Tommy says, shaking his head. "Something's really wrong-"

"Bad feeling," Ranboo agrees. "Very bad feeling."

And then all of their communicators start buzzing at once, indicating a communal message throughout the world. Niki waves for Ranboo and Tommy to stop as they both reach for their pockets.

"I'll check first, okay?" she asks, and she pulls out her own communicator. Puffy gasps, and Niki's heart sinks.

"I'm taking Michael inside," Phil announces, and Wilbur just stares down at his own communicator in slight shock.

"What is it?" Tommy demands immediately. "What's happened?"

“Nothing good,” Ranboo answers, shaking his head. Niki finally gets her communicator opened and looks down at it.

Tubbo_ was slain by Quackity using Warden's Will.

“No,” Niki breathes out. “No, no way-”

“Niki,” Tommy says, and wordlessly, she hands him the communicator. He takes a moment to read it, and then he cries out, dropping to his knees. Ranboo scrambles for it, picking it up, and then he *wails*. Niki hurries to close it, to get it away, and Puffy collides with Tommy and holds him tight. Niki pushes back her own tears and holds out her arms to Ranboo, who practically collapses into them.

“No,” Ranboo says. “No, he couldn’t have- he didn’t-”

“Dream has the revive book,” Tommy says, wiping furiously at his eyes. “Dream will bring him back, we’ll- we’ll *make* him, we’ll get him back-”

“But he’ll be in Hell in the meantime,” Wilbur murmurs. “He’ll be in Hell, and-”

The communicators buzz again. Niki’s is still tightly gripped in one hand, and she looks at it carefully.

Tubbo_ was slain by Quackity using Warden's Will.

“He did it again,” she murmurs. “He- Tommy, how long does a revival take?”

“Took Dream a week, didn’t it?” Tommy snorts. “But longer than that, he’s got a whole process, I think, he said it took him at least a couple minutes, and-”

“And it’s been thirty seconds,” Puffy says, checking the time on the messages. “So-”

“Tubbo had a fourth life?” Wilbur asks.

“Dream probably gave him one beforehand, or something,” Niki says, shaking her head. Ranboo is still collapsed in her arms, and she knows the tears dripping down his face will scar, and she gently tries to wipe them away with her sleeve. Ranboo pushes her hand away and continues to shake in her grip. “It’s okay, Ranboo. It’ll be okay. He’ll be back.”

“But he’ll- he’ll *suffer*, ” Ranboo protests. “He- I-”

“Hey, big man,” Tommy says, pulling himself out of Puffy’s grip to rest against Ranboo’s side. “It’ll be okay, yeah? Tubbo’s strong. He’s got thick skin.”

“Yeah,” Ranboo agrees. “But he shouldn’t- he shouldn’t *have* to-”

“He’ll be okay,” Tommy says firmly. “We’ll be here to help him. Just like you were for me, yeah?”

“Yeah,” Ranboo agrees again, and Niki sighs with relief as he seems to be calming himself down. “Yeah, it’ll be okay- I need to go check on Michael.” He wipes at his face with one hand and winces, then pulls himself out of Niki’s grip to rush into the house. Tommy sags down, and Niki wraps one arm around him carefully.

“He’ll be okay,” Tommy repeats. “He has to be.”

“He will, kiddo,” Puffy says, standing up and ruffling Tommy’s hair. There’s a dark look in her eyes, a look that Niki hardly recognizes.

“Where are you going?” she asks, and Puffy tries to smile, but it looks more like a grimace.

“To have a little talk with Sam,” she replies. “Quackity used Warden’s Will, didn’t he? That means Sam was in on this, too. I’m going to go figure out what’s going on.”

And just like that, she’s gone. Niki sighs, and Tommy’s shoulders start shaking. Niki prepares to comfort him, but then she realizes he’s laughing.

“Of course they’re working together,” Tommy says. “Sam- Sam helped put Tubbo in the prison. Why wouldn’t he help kill him, too?”

I’m sure there’s a reason, Niki wants to say, but she remembers sometimes people do bad things without having a reason to. Either that, or they have a reason that makes sense to them, but not to anyone else. She glances at Wilbur, and he’s frowning. She doesn’t ask what he’s thinking. She doesn’t really care.

Eventually, the three of them make their way inside. They find Ranboo laying on the couch, passed out, Michael sleeping on his chest. Phil is pacing back and forth, and he freezes when they enter.

“You okay, mate?” he asks, directing his words at Tommy. Tommy nods, going over toward Phil and flopping against him. Phil wraps his arms around Tommy carefully, looking at Niki with wide eyes. She smiles and nods encouragingly, and Phil leads Tommy over to another chair and makes him sit down.

“Come on,” Wilbur murmurs, grabbing Niki’s wrist. She yanks it out of his grip, and he has the decency to look apologetic. “Let’s clean up the bombs, in case someone decides to stop by.”

Niki nods, and the two of them wordlessly put away the explosives they’d worked so hard to create, hiding them in crates in Technoblade’s basement. Wilbur hums as he works. Niki is silent. When they’re done, the two of them stand on the deck, a good meter apart, watching the horizon.

“How different are things, really?” Wilbur asks suddenly. Niki doesn’t startle. “Tommy won’t- he won’t really tell me.”

“You hurt a lot of people, Wil,” she replies softly. “Me included. Tommy included. People have begun to move on, and now that death isn’t a permanent thing- I fear what it’ll do to the world.”

Wilbur hums something in response. “Have I told you about Hell? I was there for years, Niki, *years*. ”

“I’ve heard,” she says. She hasn’t. She doesn’t really care, either.

“Time works differently there,” Wilbur continues. “Which means- it means Tubbo could be there for a lot longer than he’s gone up here. And it- it fucks you up. It really does. Don’t- don’t tell Tommy or Ranboo. I don’t want them to worry. I guess Tommy already knows, but don’t remind him, and-”

Wilbur cuts himself off with a harsh breath, and Niki allows herself to turn and look at him. He actually looks upset, like this is a thing he’s distraught over, and tentatively, she reaches out and places a hand on his shoulder. He doesn’t recoil from it, like she’s expecting him to; instead he leans into her touch.

“I’m sorry, Niki,” he says sincerely. “For everything I did to you. It wasn’t fair of me.”

“No,” Niki agrees, and she doesn’t know if he’s just trying to get back in her good books or if he actually means it, so she’s not going to forgive him. Not yet. “It wasn’t fair of you. But I appreciate the apology.”

“I’m going to make things right,” Wilbur says insistently. “I’m-”

“Don’t say anything about Dream,” Niki interrupts. Wilbur looks at her pleadingly.

“He’s powerful, and he’s on my side, Niki,” Wilbur says.

“He’s on no one’s side but his own,” Niki says firmly. “We’re going to break him out, yes, but we’re not going to be happy about it. You need to understand that.”

“I do,” Wilbur says, and she isn’t sure if he does.

Puffy comes back while they’re still standing outside, looking furious.

“Sam cracks very easily,” she huffs. “Get Phil out here.”

Niki pokes her head into the house and sees Phil pacing again. Tommy is passed out in the armchair and Ranboo and Michael are still asleep, so she beckons wordlessly to him. He practically sprints out, closing the door quietly behind him.

“What’s going on?” he asks.

“Sam told me some very interesting things,” Puffy huffs angrily. “You wouldn’t believe- apparently Quackity’s been visiting Dream. Quite often, actually, trying to get the revive book from him.”

“Why do you say it like that?” Niki asks, reaching out. Puffy takes her hand and squeezes lightly.

“Because he’s been torturing him,” she responds, and her voice breaks. “He’s been- he’s been *torturing* Dream, for months now, and none of us knew-”

“Breathe, Puffy,” Phil says, and Puffy nods and takes a few deep breaths.

“No one deserves torture,” she says firmly, and she looks near tears. Niki holds open her arms, and Puffy falls into them. “I know he’s- he’s done some fucked-up shit, but he doesn’t deserve *torture* _”

“No,” Niki agrees, and she can feel fury building in her gut, because she believes people should be treated fairly, humanely, and evidently Dream’s getting none of that. She makes eye contact with Wilbur, and something passes between them. She’ll make sure Dream gets out of there, and that Quackity *pays*. “Did he say anything else, Puffy? About Tubbo?”

“Yeah,” Puffy sniffs, pulling back. “Yeah, Quackity wants- Quackity wants to know where the nukes are. I didn’t even know Tubbo *had* nukes-”

“What else did he say?” Phil asks, his face expressionless.

“Quackity tortured Tubbo,” Puffy breathes out, her face white. “And when Tubbo wouldn’t crack, he killed him. Apparently Tubbo respawned right away, so Quackity- Quackity killed him again. And he stayed dead.”

“Fuck,” Phil mutters, and Niki’s heart sinks. She pulls Puffy back into her grip and doesn’t let herself cry, because there’s another figure approaching on the horizon, a large figure that slowly turns into three.

“Stand ready,” Niki says. “We’ve got company.”

“Wilbur, go inside,” Phil instructs.

“But I want to stay out here,” Wilbur protests.

“You’re not supposed to be here. They already know Niki and I are here,” Phil counters. “Puffy-”

“I’m good,” Puffy says, straightening herself up, all signs of tears gone. “I don’t care if they know I’m siding with you.”

“Okay,” Phil says, sending a strong look to Wilbur, who hunches and slinks inside. The other three stand facing their visitors, shoulders set back and ready to fight. Or talk. Whatever they’re here for. Niki’s prepared for either scenario. It’s Quackity, of course it is, and with him, Purpled and Sam. They stop a good several meters back, eyeing the three carefully.

“What do you want?” Phil asks calmly, keeping his tone neutral. “You’re not exactly welcome here, Quackity.”

“Oh, I know,” Quackity laughs. “I just wanted to stop by, see how everything was going, you know?”

“You’re not welcome here, Quackity,” Niki repeats, her voice firm. “Nor are you, Sam.”

Sam has the decency to look ashamed. Purpled just looks bored. Quackity grins at them.

“I heard you got some information out of my warden here, yeah?” Quackity asks, patting Sam’s shoulder and looking at Puffy. “Well, you’ll be pleased to know that Sam went about an hour ago to check on the prisoners, and Tubbo’s alive again, so. Take of that what you will.”

“You’re a monster,” Puffy spits at him.

“I’m a businessman,” Quackity corrects her, spreading his arms. “And all I’m doing is protecting this world. You’re really gonna call me a monster when it was your own son that started all this shit in the first place?”

“Quackity,” Niki says, and she lets the harshness drip from her voice. She doesn’t think of herself as a cruel person, but knowing that Quackity has tortured two people- one of them her good friends- she’s furious. She wants him to suffer. “Get the hell out of here, and don’t come back.”

“Or what, Niki?” Quackity asks with a laugh. “You gonna throw some bread at me?”

In seconds, Niki’s sword is drawn from its sheath, and she’s taken the few steps forward to hold it against Quackity’s throat. Sam and Purpled barely have time to react, but once they do, they’re pulling Quackity back and holding out their own weapons.

“I will fucking kill you,” Niki snarls. “You’re not a monster, Quackity, you’re a man. And men can be killed.”

“Sure,” Quackity snorts, though he looks decently afraid. “And what’s to stop me from coming back?”

“You think Dream will bring you back, mate?” Phil snorts. “After all this?” And Quackity- backs up another few steps. He turns and beckons with one hand, and Purpled and Sam follow him. He turns back, glaring at the three of them, Niki standing forward with her sword still drawn.

“Don’t think you’re safe,” Quackity warns. “Any of you.”

“Try us,” Niki snarls, and with that, she turns around and strides back into the house.

I dreamed a dream (and so did I)

Chapter Notes

title is part of a shakespeare quote i'm pretty sure

also i haven't decided if this fic is gonna have a dream redemption arc or not so for now i'm leaving it ambiguous at best

None of the three of them have their communicators on them, so Tubbo can only imagine the panic in the outside world after getting his death message. Dream informed him that the sword used to kill him both times was Warden's Will- Sam's sword. Hopefully, Ranboo and Tommy have put two and two together and realized Quackity and Sam are working together and aren't to be underestimated.

Then again, Quackity refused to turn his back on a group of three malnourished prisoners. Maybe he isn't as big of a threat as he thinks he is.

(He is. Tubbo has the new scars to prove it.)

Sam comes to visit them maybe an hour after Tubbo is resurrected. He doesn't even cross the lava, just drops it and stares at them. Techno waves. Tubbo slouches further against the wall.

"He's alive, then?" Sam asks, and Techno calls back the affirmative.

"No thanks to you," he adds, and Sam looks highly uncomfortable.

"I didn't want this to happen," he says.

"Yeah, well, you're letting it, aren't you?" Tubbo snaps. "Doesn't make you innocent. Makes you complicit."

Sam leaves after that, drops the lava again. Tubbo, Techno, and Dream spend an uncomfortable

night in the cell, avoiding the patches of drying blood and sleeping in shifts. Quackity comes back at what feels like the early hours of the morning, axe held tightly in his grip. Tubbo reaches out to shake Technoblade awake, and Dream sighs and shoves himself back into his little corner.

“What?” Techno asks, voice laden with sleep, and then he’s awake instantly, all-but growling at Quackity. The other man steps onto the obsidian and the netherite blocks drop. “What do you want now? Back to kill another kid?”

“No,” Quackity snorts. “Although I like the necklace, Tubbo.”

Tubbo reaches up to his throat, fingers tracing over new scar tissue self-consciously. He’s just started getting over the fireworks scars, and now-

“What are you here for, then?” Techno demands.

“Dream,” Quackity says simply. “I want to see if he’ll tell me about his revival process.”

“You’ve been doing this for months, Quackity,” Dream says, clearly fighting to keep his voice sounding bored. “What makes you think I’ll give it up now?”

“Well, you’re clearly able to do it while in the cell,” Quackity points out. “And you claim that the knowledge is in your head. But you do have plenty of things here with you, so... I’m going to run a little experiment.”

He starts striding toward Dream, and Dream backs up further. Techno nearly steps forward, but Tubbo clutches the edge of his sleeve, pulling him back. Quackity stops short of Dream and opens their chest, then removes every single book from inside. He even takes the one from off the lectern, and Dream yelps like he’s been stung.

“There we go,” Quackity says with a malicious grin. “We’ll see if you can do your revivals now, yeah?” He turns to Tubbo and Techno- Techno’s got one arm in front of Tubbo protectively, a move he appreciates but doesn’t think is necessary. If Quackity’s going to kill him, then Quackity is going to kill him. “Getting a heart, Techno?” Quackity says mockingly. “Move out of the way, Blood God.”

Tubbo shoves Techno’s arm down, wanting to go to his fifth death with dignity. He’s got thick

skin, he thinks, he can handle being in limbo for however long it takes.

“Let’s find out if revivals give you all three lives back, or just one,” Quackity says with a grin, and then he’s bringing the axe down on the scarred side of Tubbo’s head.

The next thing he knows, he’s opening his eyes in a familiar grey-hazy place. There’s nothing around, not that he can see, and then the train station starts to form again.

“Huh,” he mutters to himself. “So the revival only gets you one life back.”

“Revival?” a horribly familiar voice says. Tubbo sighs and turns around, met with the gaze of Schlatt. Schlatt looks exactly like he did in life, exactly like he did the last time Tubbo saw him here- a day ago for Tubbo, probably longer for him- like fucking shit.

“Yeah,” Tubbo snorts. “Weren’t you wondering where I went?”

“No,” Schlatt says honestly. “I haven’t been out here in a while. I stick to my gym, mostly.”

“Your gym,” Tubbo says flatly.

“Hell yeah,” Schlatt responds. He presses his back against one of the columns and then sinks down to a sitting position. He pats the ground next to him, and Tubbo reluctantly sits a few feet away. “The place where the veil between limbo and the living world is the thinnest is a little cave that I turned into a gym. Quackity’s been to visit, it’s kind of fun.”

“Quackity’s been to visit,” Tubbo repeats, then, “Why the hell would you make a gym? You’re-” he gestures vaguely- “you.”

Schlatt shrugs. “Is it so bad to want to be in shape?” he asks. “Listen, kid, I don’t know what they told you about my last few deaths-”

“That you had a heart attack and died,” Tubbo says blankly. He doesn’t care. He’s not going to let Schlatt affect him. He’s not.

“Well, I’m pretty sure they poisoned me,” Schlatt huffs. “Because a man doesn’t have three heart attacks in a row. Nah, I figured, why not get in shape? Dream might bring me back some day. Speaking of- he used the revival book on you? And it worked?”

Tubbo nods in confirmation, and Schlatt grins. He takes a celebratory swig out of the bottle clutched in one hand, and holds out the other for a fist-bump. Tubbo does not accept. There are too many thoughts swirling around in his mind for that.

“How’d you even get the revival book in the first place?” Tubbo asks curiously. “I figured if anyone would make a deal with the Devil it would be Dream.”

“It’s cause the Devil ain’t real, kid,” Schlatt snorts. “I’ve been to a lot of places before this one. I talk to the right people. Not every world is like ours. Some only give you one life, some give you unlimited. It’s a little recipe I cooked up, and it works.”

“You’re smarter than you let on.” The words are slipping out of Tubbo’s mouth before he can take them back, and Schlatt just laughs.

“So are you, kid. Nukes?”

“It’s for protection,” Tubbo says stubbornly. “Can you- can you fuck off, maybe? I’d like to be here alone, for however long I’m going to be here.”

“Sure thing, kid,” Schlatt says, pulling himself to his feet. “If you ever wanna stop by the gym, let me know. That’s where I’ll be. I’ll send Ghostbur your way if I see him.”

Tubbo moves so that he’s sitting with his back against the column like Schlatt had been, and eventually, Ghostbur finds him. They spend some time, sitting there together, time that must be equivalent to several days. Tubbo doesn’t know how long it’s been in the real world, but he tries to keep track of how long it’s been in limbo.

Around the fourteenth day, a new figure approaches, from beyond the haze at the back of the station. Ghostbur isn’t around, and neither is Schlatt, so Tubbo shoves himself to his feet and stands in a defensive position, ready to fight.

The figure is George. George steps out of the shadows, goggles firmly over his eyes, and he looks-shocked. Completely stunned to see Tubbo standing there. He pulls the cape over his shoulders tighter around him and takes another few steps forward.

“Tubbo?” he says cautiously. “What- what are you doing here?”

“I could ask you the same thing,” Tubbo relaxes. George isn’t a threat- George hasn’t been a threat in a long time, not since the first war. “Are you dead, too, then?”

“No,” George says, shaking his head. “I just- I just come here, sometimes. When I sleep. I dream a lot.”

“And your dreams take you to the afterlife?” Tubbo asks doubtfully.

“What can I say?” George responds haughtily. “I’m special.”

“Sure,” Tubbo says, sitting back down. “Come on, take a seat, I’m just waiting for your boyfriend to bring me back from the dead.”

“You’ve lost your last life, then?” George asks, sitting down next to Tubbo and arranging his cape around himself carefully. He doesn’t even say anything about the boyfriend bit, which Tubbo finds vaguely amusing.

“Nope,” Tubbo says, feigning cheerfulness. “This is the fifth life I’ve lost. Dream brings me back, Quackity kills me again. It’s a fun little game we’ve been playing.”

“Quackity?” George asks, raising one eyebrow. “Why would Quackity- why would he do that?”

“Man, you’re really out of the loop, aren’t you?” Tubbo snorts. “Quackity put me and Technoblade in prison. He thinks we’re threats. And he’s been coming by and torturing me, and killing me, because he’s still trying to get the revival book out of Dream.”

“Oh,” George says softly. “I knew Quackity had been visiting, but... I didn’t know he put more people there. I spend most of my time in Kinoko.”

“Sleeping?” Tubbo asks.

“Dreaming,” George corrects him. He stands up suddenly, starts making his way toward the platform. “I think I need to go. I’m not supposed to be here.”

“Wait-” Tubbo says, standing up. “Wait, please-”

“It was nice talking to you, Tubbo,” George says, and he’s about to jump down onto the tracks. Wracking his brain for something to say, Tubbo shouts out,

“Quackity’s been torturing Dream!”

George freezes in his movements, turns back. The look on his face is one of horror, and he takes a few strides to be standing eye-to-eye with Tubbo.

“What did you say?” he asks, and Tubbo swallows harshly.

“Quackity’s been torturing Dream,” he repeats. “For- for several months now. He’s trying to get Dream’s knowledge of the revival book, but up until he put Technoblade in the prison he went every night and tortured Dream to try and get information.”

George looks furious. Rightfully so, Tubbo thinks. If he found out someone was torturing Ranboo every day, he would want their head mounted on his wall.

“Okay,” George says. “What do you need me to do?”

“What?” Tubbo asks, taking a step back.

“What do you need me to do?” George repeats. “I’m breaking you out. How do I go about doing that?”

Tubbo's eyes widen. This... this is a good outcome of this whole situation.

"Find Ranboo and Tommy, I guess," Tubbo says. "They're probably trying to break me out right now. And the Syndicate, for Techno- that's Phil, Niki, and Ranboo. Quackity will probably kill me again, and you'll probably sleep again, so we can communicate that way, I suppose."

"You're right," George says firmly. "I'll find them. Where are they?"

"Probably the Arctic," Tubbo says. "Um- yeah. That would be great, actually. If you could help them."

"I will," George confirms. He mutters something under his breath that Tubbo doesn't catch, and then he's saying, "I'll talk to you soon," and striding off into the haze.

Tubbo stands there in a daze for a moment- he's just gotten another ally on his side. Then he thinks about how weird it is that George visits the afterlife in his dreams. He snorts and sits back down, and waits for Ghostbur to come back so he has someone to talk to.

He's there for another sixteen days- he counts it. Then the train is pulling into the station and he's only done this once before, but he knows how it works by now, so he gives Ghostbur a tight hug and climbs aboard.

Coming back to life is no less painful than the last time, and Tubbo sits up with a gasp. Dream and Techno are both standing over him, and Techno reaches out to help him up once he's gotten his breathing under control.

"How long has it been?" Tubbo asks.

"Almost exactly a day," Techno responds. "Quackity wouldn't give us the books back until Dream confirmed it's how the revivals happen."

Based on the look that he and Dream exchange, Dream *doesn't* need a book to make the revivals happen, but Tubbo's not going to dwell on it. He finds that he doesn't really care- he's going to break out of here, and then Dream isn't going to be his fucking problem anymore.

“Your boyfriend can visit the afterlife in his dreams,” he says to Dream, instead of questioning anything else, and Dream splutters.

“What?” he asks. Tubbo nods.

“I talked to George,” he says. “He’s going to find the Syndicate and Tommy, and help us break out. So if Quackity kills me again, I can talk to him.”

“I’m gonna need you to backtrack, like, five steps,” Techno says blankly. Tubbo sits back down and starts to explain.

Oh, yeah. They’re getting out of here.

Chapter Notes

mushroom man and his pet god

updates will go back to wednesdays next week! :)

They get the message for Tubbo's fifth death, and instead of starting another period of mourning, it only makes them work harder. They study maps and build bombs and they watch Quackity's spies dart around the edges of the landscape, flitting in and out of visibility through the wind-tossed snow.

They don't sleep easy that night, between Michael crying for Tubbo and the nightmares that plague all of them and the looming threat of Quackity knowing they're coming for him. They sleep in Phil's living room, piled under blankets and on couches, meaning they all wake up when Michael cries or someone wakes up from a nightmare with a yell.

They sleep in shifts, always having two people awake just in case. Though they don't doubt they could take Quackity down, they want to be vigilant. The next morning, they're greeted by a visitor when the sun has barely risen. Phil has one wing wrapped around Tommy, who's fallen asleep on his shoulder. He nudges the kid and points out the window toward the lone figure striding toward them.

"Get up," Phil hisses as Tommy jerks for the sword he has laying on the floor. "Everyone get up, someone's coming!"

They planned for this, when they were working out shifts the previous night- as much as they want to fight, Ranboo doesn't trust himself around anyone that may have had a hand in hurting Tubbo, and no one else trusts Tommy not to punch the nearest member of Las Nevadas in the face. They've been assigned to take Michael and hide in the back rooms while Phil, Niki, and Puffy deal with whatever problem that arises. Wilbur's been instructed to remain in the house, but as the three stride outside to meet their guest, he leans on the door outside anyways.

"Who goes there?" Phil yells. There's a snowstorm brewing, and visibility is low, but the lone figure continues making their way toward the group. Niki and Puffy stop slightly behind Phil, swords drawn, as they wait for the visitor to come to them.

“It’s me,” a slightly unfamiliar voice calls out. Only Niki seems to recognize it, a sound from before Puffy and Phil had even come to this world.

“George!” she calls, sheathing her sword and stepping out in front of Phil.

“Stop,” Phil hisses, grabbing her shoulder and pulling her back. “Isn’t he friends with Quackity?”

“No one is friends with Quackity,” Puffy huffs, raising her sword slightly. “But that doesn’t mean I trust him. Stay back, Niki.”

“I come in peace!” George yells as he approaches, and as he gets closer, they can see the stark white goggles that blend in with the snow, and the swirling red cloak that stands out like blood. “I don’t have a white flag, but I doubt you’d be able to see it if I did!”

He stops a few feet away from them, hands raised in surrender. He looks freezing, pale white, like he hasn’t been outside in a long time.

“We need to talk,” he says. “I don’t have any weapons, you can search me-”

“I trust you,” Niki says firmly. “Let’s bring him inside.”

They march back to the houses, and Wilbur looks genuinely surprised to see George. George, in turn, eyes Wilbur warily, like he doesn’t trust anything about the situation.

“Your hair is white,” he says flatly.

“I was revived,” Wilbur responds, head held high. “That’s what happens, I guess.”

“Funny, I didn’t see you anywhere,” George replies easily, breezing past him into the house. Wilbur watches him go with an expression of confusion that the others share. Nevertheless, they follow him inside, settling down on the couches. George makes himself at home, grabbing a blanket and wrapping it around his shoulders despite the heavy cloak. Niki and Phil exchange a

glance, wondering if they should tell George about the kids.

“You’re going to want to get Tommy and Ranboo, they’re going to want to hear what I have to say,” George says, like he’s reading their minds. Everyone else in the room gives him a look that he completely ignores. Slowly, Puffy goes to get the others.

“Gogy?” Tommy asks as he emerges from down the stairs, Michael clinging to his back. “What are you doing here?”

“I’m here to help,” George says grimly. “I’ve spoken to Tubbo.”

“Impossible,” Ranboo says, voice low and eyes narrowed. “Tubbo’s in the prison.”

“Tubbo was in limbo,” George corrects him. “I can visit limbo.”

“Hold on,” Phil says. “Start over. You can visit limbo?”

“I just said that,” George says with the air of someone rolling his eyes- not that they can see his eyes. “What, you think just because I’m not Dream that I’m not powerful? I helped forge this world. When I sleep, I can visit limbo. Tubbo was- possibly still is- dead, meaning I could speak to him.”

“And you’re here to tell us that?” Tommy asks roughly. “That Tubbo’s dead? We already knew that, we all saw the message-”

“I’m here to tell you that I’m on your side,” George cuts him off, pursing his lips as if he’s debating still helping them. “I’ve been out of the loop for a long time, sleeping, dreaming, in Kinoko Kingdom. I bullied Sapnap into telling me what was going on, and with information from Tubbo, I’m not... pleased with Quackity.”

“What did Sapnap tell you?” Wilbur asks, leaning in close. They know what he’s doing- he’s trying to gauge if George will help him release Dream or not.

“About everything that’s happened since Schlatt, basically. I’ve been busy.”

“Busy,” Tommy says flatly. George shrugs.

“Do you want my help or not?” he asks. “All I ask in return is that Dream is freed along with Tubbo and Technoblade.”

“And what do you have to offer?” Puffy asks.

“Communication with the inside,” George says. “I’d say that’s pretty valuable.”

“Yeah, if you’re asleep and one of them is dead,” Tommy snorts.

“The chances of one of them being dead are pretty high, mate,” Phil points out. “What else do you have, George?”

“I used to be a fighter,” George shrugs. “Wilbur and Tommy know. I fought against them. And I have a god wrapped around my little finger.”

The room freezes, the only sound being Michael squirming against Tommy’s back. George turns to the child as if he hadn’t just dropped a bombshell on them.

“Who’s that?” he asks curiously, patting his lap. Michael scrambles down and approaches George carefully. Ranboo reaches out, like he’s going to stop his son, but George’s arms swoop in faster than any of them could have anticipated to pick Michael up. “Hello. Who are you?”

“Michael,” Michael says proudly. He lifts George’s glasses off his face, and George raises his eyebrows at the kid.

“My son,” Ranboo says gruffly. “And Tubbo’s.”

“Tubbo’s son,” George repeats, looking Michael in the eyes. The piglin is squirming at the mention of his other father, looking around like he expects Tubbo to appear. His eyes narrow, and he sets Michael down on the ground. Michael runs to Ranboo’s legs, clinging to them with a grin, and

George stands up.

“What are you doing?” Niki asks nervously, and then, like nothing has happened, there’s something vaguely human-shaped hovering in the air behind Phil’s couch. It surrounds George like a halo, something like a biblically-accurate angel, with three sets of wings and four arms and dozens of eyes covering its face. There’s a large X over where its eyes should be, and its head is floating above its shoulders. There are no legs, just a glowing light that extends to the ground. It’s horrifying, and George smiles up at it like it’s the most normal thing in the world.

“This is the god,” George says, turning back to everyone else in the room. “His name is Exde.”

“Exde,” Puffy repeats blankly, sounding like she’s going to faint.

“Yes,” George replies. He turns back to the god. “Say hello, Exde.”

“Hello,” the god says, and there is no mouth that moves, just a sound that emanates from somewhere in his direction. “Why am I here, George?”

“To prove that I’m useful,” George huffs. “I don’t think they believed that I could summon God, and I want to help them.”

“Well, let me know when you need me,” Exde snorts, and he sounds... he sounds like Dream. “I’ll be here.”

“Thank you,” George says with a nod, and the god disappears.

“Holy fuck,” Tommy says, staring at the place where Exde once was.

“That’s God?” Wilbur asks. “You can just- call him down?”

“Do you want my help or not?” George asks, one eyebrow raised.

“Yes,” Ranboo, Niki, and Phil all say at the same time. George grins.

“Then let’s get to work.”

In the deserts, two people meet in the back corners of a temple, glancing around to see if they’ve been followed. Fundy pulls his hat off his head, holding it close to his chest, and Foolish clutches his trident tightly in one hand. This is his realm; Quackity has no hold over them here.

“I don’t like this,” Fundy whispers, shaking his head. Even his whispers echo throughout the empty halls. “What happened to just going along with it?”

“He wanted me to kill a child,” Foolish hisses. “He told me to burn down their home if I think Ranboo is conspiring with the Syndicate. I built that mansion, I’m not burning it down.”

“He’s been killing Tubbo over and over again,” Fundy replies. “That’s- that’s kind of fucked up, honestly. And I have no love for Dream, but torture?”

“He shouldn’t have told us all of that, I guess,” Foolish shrugs. “I may not like Dream either, but he’s my brother, in some fucked-up way.”

“And Puffy’s for sure with the Syndicate,” Fundy adds. “That’s your whole family.”

“So is Wilbur,” Foolish counters. “That’s yours.”

They stand there for a moment, staring each other down. Quackity had gathered the members of Las Nevadas earlier in the day, telling them that he was working on figuring out the revive book and explaining everything that he’d been doing in the prison. Sam had stood behind him uncomfortably the whole time, under the judgemental gaze of Fundy and Foolish, the apathetic gaze of Purpled, and the encouraging grin of Slimecicle.

Fundy had whispered over the communicators to Foolish that they needed to talk, and Foolish suggested his temple. They both knew what it was about- neither of them are particularly comfortable with anything that’s been going on.

“So what’s he all done?” Fundy asks. “Tortured Dream, killed Tubbo, locked Technoblade up- I’m no fan of Technoblade, but locking him up when he didn’t actually do anything?”

“Quackity’s gone crazy with power,” Foolish agrees. “But what can we do? If he knows we’re helping the Syndicate, he’d kill us.”

“Please, you think he could kill us?” Fundy asks. “It’s two against one.”

“He has Sam and Purpled,” Foolish points out.

“Fine, then,” Fundy agrees. “We lay low for now. But if we find out anything else- we tell Phil and Puffy. Yeah?”

“Yeah,” Foolish agrees. They make their way out of the temple, and Foolish stands on a hill and watches as Fundy disappears over the horizon. Pulling out his communicator, he sends a whisper to his mother.

You’ve got people on your side, is all he says, and he knows she’ll get the message.

We Can Die With Them, or We Can Die For Them

Chapter Notes

chapter title is an adapted quote from the movie Cabin in the Woods. horror comedy my beloved

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

The prison is quiet.

According to their internal clocks, they all agree that night should be falling. But there's been no sign of Quackity, and someone needs to die to talk to George. They sit in a tense triangle, waiting for someone to say something.

"I'll bite," Tubbo says. "One of us has to die tonight. And I've never really been much of a revenge person, so I don't really fancy killing one of you."

The truth is, he just doesn't want to deal with beating someone to death. He doesn't want that on his conscience, and he doesn't really like the idea of doing it, either.

"Well, I obviously can't die," Dream snorts. "You need me to bring you back."

"Fine," Tubbo says. He was expecting this- of course Dream is going to be looking out for himself. "Okay, so how do you want to kill me, then? Beat me to death?"

He stands up and holds out his arms, because that's how it's going to go, isn't it? He's going to die, and it's going to be fine. He's done it before, he'll probably do it again. Technoblade isn't going to offer himself up to be killed- Technoblade never dies, and all that- so it's got to be him.

"We're not going to beat you to death," Techno growls before Dream can even say anything. Tubbo's- a bit surprised, honestly. He figured Techno would jump at the chance to beat someone to death with his bare fists. But no, Techno's looking at him with something almost close to *care* in his eyes.

"Well, we have to kill me somehow," Tubbo points out. He looks to Dream. "How do you suppose

we do it, then?"

"Why are you looking at me?" Dream snorts.

"You're the resident child killer," Techno says. Dream rolls his eyes. "Come up with something."

"Lava," Dream says immediately. "I've thought about throwing you in it many, many times, Technoblade."

"Thank you," Techno says sarcastically. "Thank you *so* much, Dream, my best friend-"

"I am going to step into lava to avoid you both," Tubbo announces. God, he's starting to get sick of them. They're like annoying roommates, the both of them. "Please just kill me now."

"Okay," Techno says, standing up. He and Tubbo both step closer to the lava. "You take a step in, I'll pull you back, it should probably. Uh. Burn you to death on impact."

"More scars," Tubbo says. He lays on the sarcasm as best as he can. " *Yay* ."

"Don't be so cheerful about it," Techno snorts. "Ready?"

"Ready," Tubbo confirms, and he steps into the lava.

It hurts. Shockingly enough. For about ten seconds, it hurts like a bitch, worse than the fireworks, worse than any other death, probably, and then there's nothing.

And then there's limbo. That beautiful, beautiful train station that Tubbo has unfortunately gotten so used to is surrounding him, and he takes a seat and takes a few deep breaths in before he does anything else. His skin feels itchy, almost, like there's still lava crawling up and down it. He pushes the feeling away and turns to see that George is actually already waiting for him.

"Took you long enough," George snorts.

“Time is different here,” Tubbo shrugs. “How are you, big man?”

“You’ve got a lot of people looking out for you,” George says instead of answering the question. “The Syndicate’s got Tommy, Wilbur, Puffy, and half of Las Nevadas working to get you out.”

“Las Nevadas?” Tubbo asks. “Who in Las Nevadas is going against Big Q?”

“As far as I’m aware, Fundy and the shark demigod,” George says. “Foolish, I think Puffy said his name was? I’m not too caught up on who everyone is.”

“Foolish,” Tubbo says with a nod. “Well, I’m glad they’ve come around. Have you come up with a plan at all?”

“We have part of one,” George answers. “We were just waiting to talk to you. Tommy said something about elder guardians.”

“Technoblade’s pretty sure there’s one directly beneath us,” Tubbo confirms. “And there are others throughout the prison, we know that. The fatigue is bad if you get too close.”

“So we’ll have to find a way to take care of those,” George mutters to himself. “Alright, that should be easy enough.”

“Easy enough?” Tubbo asks doubtfully. “I don’t think-”

“Trust me,” George says with a grin. “Underneath you, you said?”

“Yep. They think it’s just solid obsidian above us. Maybe some netherite blocks, because apparently Sam just has a ton of those. They’re everywhere.”

“Don’t worry, we know. Tommy’s given us all the details about the process of getting in. We know how we’re going to do it. And we’re going to set off explosives on top of the prison as a distraction. You guys just worry about keeping yourselves alive until we show up.”

Tubbo laughs. “That’s going to be harder than it sounds, honestly.”

“You can do it,” George says. “When you hear the explosions, be ready. It means we’re coming in.”

“Sounds good to me,” Tubbo says. “Stay safe. Tell Ranboo and Michael and Tommy I say hello, please? And that I love them.” Just in case something goes wrong. Just in case he’s stuck in the prison for even longer. Even if he can’t say it to them himself, he supposes through a messenger is good enough.

“They told me to say the same thing,” George says. “Let Techno know the Syndicate is coming for him, and tell Dream that Wilbur and I will make sure he isn’t stuck in there any longer.”

“I will,” Tubbo promises. “I’ll see you soon, George.”

“I’ll see you,” George nods, and he walks off into the mist.

Tubbo’s there for another good few days before he sees the lights of the oncoming train. Dream is smiling at him, and it feels... terrifying, honestly, seeing the man that was his enemy for so long genuinely smiling at him. For a brief moment, he remembers a time when they were like brothers. He brushes it off. Times are different now.

He awakens back in his body in Pandora’s Vault with a gasp. Techno and Dream are both standing back, giving him plenty of space as he rakes his nails down the side of his face, feeling new scar tissue covering the fireworks scars.

“Your hair,” Dream mutters. Tubbo reaches a hand up- his skin still itches, but he tries to push it aside, he knows clawing at it won’t do him any good- and grips at his hair. “It’s, like, half-white.”

He’ll match with Ranboo. That’s the first thing he thinks, and he laughs, and then once he starts laughing he can’t stop, and Technoblade and Dream look at him like he’s crazy for a good few moments. Once he’s calmed down, he pulls himself up to a seated position.

“The Syndicate says they’re coming for you,” he says first to Techno, then turns to Dream. “And

George promises he and Wilbur will make sure you aren't trapped here any longer."

"Thank you," Techno says quietly, and Dream nods. "Did George say anything else?"

"They're going to handle everything, apparently," Tubbo shrugs. "When we feel the explosions, that's when we get ready. They're setting them off on top of the prison as a distraction."

"What's their plan, then?" Dream asks. "Walk right in?"

"I don't know," Tubbo says honestly. "George didn't really say anything else."

Before their conversation can continue, the lava starts dropping. All three back up instantly, and Dream and Techno exchange a strong look. Tubbo wants to ask them about it, but the platform is already moving across the ravine.

"Hello, boys!" Quackity calls. Sam is standing where he normally is, looking immensely uncomfortable. "We heard that you finally got sick of Tubbo! Chased him into the lava, eh?" He grins and steps off the platform. "Why'd you bring him back?"

Technoblade and Dream remain silent. Tubbo glances back and forth between the two of them.

"Oh, come on," Quackity says. "Don't tell me you're playing the quiet game. I can make you talk, you know. If you don't want to say it in front of Tubbo I can just kill him again for you."

He reaches one hand down to draw his axe, and before he can even pull it out, Dream and Technoblade are both rushing forward. Dream grabs Quackity's arm and pulls it to the side, and Technoblade full-on tackles him to the ground. Tubbo's eyes widen and he pushes his back against the wall, because what the hell are they doing?

"Not again, Quackity," Techno snarls. "We're not going to let you kill him again." Quackity is straining against both of them, but Dream's got his axe held high, and Techno's got his head gripped between both hands. Quackity's legs flail and Tubbo wants to yell for them to stop, but his voice is caught in his throat. Sam is screaming from across the lava, trying to get them to stop, but there's a crunch as Dream pulls Quackity's arm down.

And then Techno slams Quackity's head back against the obsidian ground. It's one good, solid hit, and it's enough that Tubbo sees the life fade from Quackity's good eye quickly. There's a moment of silence, and then Quackity is gasping back to life, scrambling back. Techno and Dream let him go, Dream still gripping the axe.

"What the *fuck* ," he snarls, reaching for his sword. "You're going to fucking *pay* for that-"

"No," Dream says, bringing the axe to a defensive position. "I don't think we will."

"I think you're going to get out of here, Quackity," Techno growls. "And you aren't going to come back."

Quackity looks aghast, almost. He makes eye contact with Tubbo, as if Tubbo's going to help him. When he realizes Tubbo won't, his eyes narrow, and he scoffs.

"Fine," he says. "But you guys are making a big mistake."

"I don't think we are," Dream says, and he raises the axe a tiny bit. Quackity scrambles back onto the platform, and Sam brings it back immediately. Tubbo takes a step forward and watches with the others as the lava drops again. As soon as it's down, Dream lets the axe sink from his grip. It clatters to the ground, and Techno scoops it up instantly, protectively. Dream is laughing, clutching his arms to his stomach and full-body laughing.

"What the hell was that?" Tubbo demands, and Techno cracks a smile.

"That's what we talked about while you were dead," he says. Dream keeps laughing. "You good, green boy?"

"That felt good," Dream says. "That felt- God, that felt really good."

He continues laughing, and Techno shakes his head and turns back to Tubbo.

"We said we wouldn't let him hurt any of us again," Techno continues. "Including you, Tubbo."

That feels so completely incomprehensible, the idea that these two, of all people, are going to protect him, Tubbo doesn't really know what to say. He stands there for a moment, a little bit in shock, and eventually, he ends up sitting on the ground at Techno's side. Dream is on Techno's other side, and Techno's cloak is wrapped around all three of them. Quackity's axe is on the ground at their feet. And despite the roaring of the lava next to him making his skin still sting with fresh memories, Tubbo feels *safe*.

And then the explosions start.

Chapter End Notes

i made a spotify [playlist](#) for this fic in case anyone wants it hfgkjdfk

[twitter](#)

comments/kudos/subs/etc are always appreciated!!!

you will pray to the god that you always denied

Chapter Notes

chapter title from "dust bowl dance" by mumford & sons

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

George settles down to sleep roughly ten minutes before the communicators of everyone gathered in Phil's house go off.

Tubbo_ tried to swim in lava to escape Technoblade.

"No way," Niki says, shaking her head. "He wouldn't- would he?"

"I guess we'll find out," Phil says, nodding to George's sleeping form. He's only asleep for another twenty tense minutes, everyone else in the house practically foaming at the mouths, wanting to know what's going on. Ranboo and Tommy are curled up in the same armchair, each trying to comfort the other. Puffy drapes a blanket over them carefully.

"They've been through a lot, haven't they?" Wilbur murmurs to Niki. They're both leaning on the kitchen counter, watching the rest of the room.

"Yes," Niki says quietly. She almost doesn't want to punch him in the face. "They have."

"That was our fault, wasn't it? With Tommy, at least."

Niki snorts. "Don't blame me for your mistakes."

"Right. Sorry."

She nods to show that she accepts the apology, then goes back to staring at George.

He doesn't wake up quickly or with a start. Instead, he blinks his eyes slowly and languidly, like a cat, then sits up and stretches. He seems to be completely ignoring everyone else around him, until he realizes they're all staring at him intently.

"What?" he asks self-consciously.

"No, no, take your time, mate," Phil says sarcastically, and George narrows his eyes.

"Do you want information or not?" he asks. "The plan's been received. He's confirmed that there's an elder guardian directly below them and more throughout the prison."

"And your boy will take care of those?" Phil asks, and George nods.

"What about Technoblade?" Puffy asks. "We got a death message. He was chased into lava by Technoblade."

"It didn't seem like anything was wrong," George shrugs. "Quackity must not have been there to kill him."

"Prime," Tommy mutters as a sort of curse. "He didn't say anything else, did he?"

"He also says hello to Ranboo, Michael, and Tommy," he lists, looking at the kids. Michael is fast asleep upstairs, Ranboo having put him to bed earlier. He had a hard time leaving the kid alone, but he knows he'll be safe in Phil's house. "And that he loves them."

"Of course he does," Tommy mutters. "Clingy."

Ranboo... Ranboo is quiet. He has too much going through his mind. He thinks, after all this is over, maybe they should take a vacation. Not to the beach- Michael doesn't like the water, and neither does he. Maybe to the mountains. Mountains sound nice. They're probably beautiful this time of year. Tommy will come with them, of course, and they'll have fun. They'll be at peace. They'll be away from everyone else in this damn world.

"Okay," Ranboo says. He's determined to get this vacation now. No matter what happens, they're

going to be happy. Don't they deserve that? "Let's go over the plan one more time."

And they do, marking out maps and double-checking explosives and potions, contacting Fundy and Foolish and making sure they're ready. They're about to head out to start planting the first of the explosives when their communicators go off again.

Quackity was slain by Technoblade.

"Oh my God," Niki breathes out, and then Wilbur starts laughing. Wilbur starts laughing, and Phil starts laughing, and everyone else waits for it to die down before speaking.

"Well, he got what he deserved," Phil snorts. "If Techno didn't kill him, I would have."

"There's going to be too much activity by the prison now," George points out. "Sapnap doesn't necessarily like Quackity, but he'll go to see what's wrong. And if anyone was going to stop us, he would."

"Can't you tell him to lay off?" Phil asks. "He's best friends with Dream, isn't he?"

"He swore if Dream escaped, he'd be the one to kill him," Tommy says quietly, contemplatively.

"We can't risk anyone interfering with the breakout," Niki says firmly. "We'll wait a bit."

Once they're hopeful things have died down, they slowly make their way from the arctic to Pandora's Vault. The prison looms large and wide as Puffy, Niki, Wilbur, and Phil go toward the end jutting out over the water, rowing slowly so as not to disturb anything. Puffy and Niki each have backpacks full of explosives, and they drink invisibility potions as they get closer.

"Good luck," Phil says quietly, handing over a large bundle of vines. The two women begin the climb, with the placement of vines further up the walls as the only indication of them being there. Phil and Wilbur row slowly around the corner, ready to meet the others at the entrance to the Vault, where George is already waiting.

Tommy and Ranboo, meanwhile, meet up with Foolish and Fundy on the edges of the territory.

Tommy shakes Fundy's hand quickly, and Ranboo nods to Foolish.

"Sorry about everything," Foolish says quietly. "About- about letting it go this far. It shouldn't have. We shouldn't have been with him in the first place."

"It's okay," Ranboo says, a bit icily. He knows they mean only the best, and he holds Michael a bit tighter to his chest. He wasn't about to leave Michael alone and though he knows this could be dangerous, he also knows they have a good support system surrounding them. A good support system, and the fact that he's willing to do anything to keep his family safe. "You're here now."

Slowly, so as not to be seen, they make their way not to the prison, but to Sam's house. It's almost too easy to break in, Tommy picking the lock quickly and then bursting down the door. Sam is awake, which Ranboo supposes is odd for the middle of the night, but only makes things easier. Fundy raises a crossbow as they step inside. Ranboo waits on the outside, keeping watch, Michael squirming a bit in his grip.

"Papa?" he asks.

"Soon," Ranboo murmurs. "He'll be here soon."

No matter what it takes. Ranboo's not really one for killing people, or revenge, or any of that, but he agrees with Phil. If Technoblade hadn't taken Quackity's second life, Ranboo would have fought the others for the chance to. He's not about to permanently kill anyone, not when he knows that Dream won't bring them back. He's not about to condemn anyone to hell. But God, does he want to make Quackity bleed.

It takes less than three minutes for the other three to force Sam outside, weapons pointed at his back, his hands raised in surrender. Ranboo thinks it might be the first time he's seen Sam completely armorless, weaponless, only his mask secure around his face.

"Ranboo," Sam says, voice low. "Did you put them up to this? What, did you pay them?"

"What makes you think we need to be paid?" Tommy growls. "You put my best friend in prison. Now you're going to help us get him out."

"I'm not going to do that," Sam says, shaking his head. "Quackity wants him locked up for a

reason.”

“Well, Quackity’s not the Warden,” Fundy points out. “You are. And you have to recognize that Tubbo hasn’t done anything wrong.”

“Quackity’s just scared of a bunch of kids,” Ranboo sneers, and Sam balks. It’s probably the contrast of Ranboo’s glare and the child in his arms. “Are you?”

“You should be,” Tommy snarls, more dangerous than Ranboo’s ever heard him, sword digging into the small of Sam’s back. “You should be scared of us, because if you *hurt* one of us, we’ll fucking kill you. You understand that?”

Sam swallows harshly and nods. “I understand. But you do know- getting Tubbo out means the chance that Technoblade and Dream get out, too, right?”

“That’s kind of the point of this whole thing,” Foolish says. “Are you going to help us, or are we going to have to force your hand?”

Sam sighs, long and hard, and then nods. “I’ll help you.”

“Smart choice,” Tommy says, voice unforgiving and unrelenting. “Walk.”

So they walk, all the way to the Vault, where they find Phil, Wilbur, and George waiting. Phil and Wilbur are watching them as they approach; George is staring up at the prison, like something will change.

“Oh,” Sam says. “I see what you mean about getting them all out now.” They’re close enough that Phil snorts, holding out a hand. Sam glances back- Tommy still has a sword pointed at his back, and Fundy’s crossbow is raised. Not that they need it, Ranboo is sure; he’s seen Foolish summon lightning out of nowhere before. Either way, Tommy nods, and Sam shakes Phil’s hand.

“Glad you made the good decision, mate,” Phil says. “Makes it easier on all of us.”

“Oh, good,” George says when he turns back and sees that the two groups have merged. “Should I

call him now?"

"Wait a minute," Phil instructs. "Give 'em a chance to set off the explosives first."

"Explosives won't break through the prison," Sam points out.

"We know," Wilbur says with a grin. They wait another minute or two, and then they see two figures darting over the edges of the walls, followed by a massive explosion that lights up the night sky. Ranboo knows that they'll only have a few minutes- if they're lucky- before there are people swarming them, Quackity amongst them. George looks back questioningly again, and Ranboo nods.

"Do your thing," he says. He's not particularly excited to meet God again, but hey, if that's how this is going to go, then it's how it's going to go. George nods and turns toward the prison walls, and a moment later, there's Exde, floating before them. Sam, Foolish, and Fundy all gape, mouths open and eyes wide.

"You rang?" Exde says, and Tommy flinches. It's barely noticeable, and Ranboo thinks he's the only one that sees it, but it's clearly because of how much Exde sounds like Dream.

"There are elder guardians in the prison," George informs him.

"I'm aware," Exde says, swiveling back and forth slowly, as if he's taking in the members of the group. "What would you like me to do?"

"Kill them?" George asks endearingly. "Please? For me?"

"Certainly," Exde responds, and he sounds almost... fond. Ranboo wonders what the hell George did to get a god wrapped around his little finger. Probably nothing- if Ranboo were a god, Tubbo and Tommy wouldn't need to do much for him to be at their beck and call. That's what best friends are for. Although George and this god may not necessarily be just friends, he thinks, but to each their own.

There's another moment, and then Exde's head bobs up and down, as if he's nodding. "Anything else I can do for you?"

“Sam, what other security measures on the prison are there that we need disabled?” Phil asks.

“We’ll know if you lie,” Wilbur adds threateningly.

Sam blanches again, then cites a small list of things that Exde seems to take care of with a wave of the hand. Once he’s done, they bid him a good day, and George promises to talk to him later.

“I know you’re breaking *him* out,” the god says with displeasure. “But I see how much you all care.” He seems to look at Ranboo, then Tommy, then Phil, and finally Wilbur. “Imprisonment for the sake of one person is not just.”

“Thank you,” Ranboo says, bowing his head. Exde bows his own head in return, and then he disappears.

“Okay,” Sam says quietly. “We go in, we get them, and you get out of my sight. You hear me? I’m only doing this because I know what Quackity’s been doing and I don’t like it. I don’t like Dream, but I don’t like the idea of torturing him, either, and Tubbo and Technoblade haven’t done anything worthy of being locked up. But if anyone asks, you forced my hand.”

“Understood, big man,” Tommy says, rolling his eyes. “Just get us in.”

And he does. He leads them through the Warden’s side of the prison, no extra methods necessary. He takes them straight to the maximum security cell. Ranboo clutches Michael close to his chest as his son looks hopefully to the wall of lava.

And Sam lets it drop.

Chapter End Notes

[playlist](#) link that actually works this time lmao

[twitter](#)

comments/kudos/subs/etc are always appreciated!!!

you haven't met me, i am the only son

Chapter Notes

chapter title is once again from 'dust bowl dance' by mumford & sons

thank you all so so much for the love you've been showing this fic, i appreciate every single kudos and comment more than words can describe!!!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

It's a few minutes after the explosions that the mining fatigue wears off. Tubbo rolls back his shoulders and stands up a bit straighter; he can barely imagine how Dream is feeling right now, having been under the influence of the elder guardians for months. Technoblade looks thrilled, tossing Quackity's axe back and forth from hand to hand.

"Oh, yeah," he says. "This is gonna be fun."

They hear voices across the lava chasm a few minutes later, a sure sign the lava will be dropping. No netherite blocks rise, but all three of them are immediately tense.

"It's probably not Quackity," Tubbo rationalizes.

"No," Technoblade agrees, taking a step in front of him. "But it could be."

"Explosions would alert people," Dream says. "And we have no idea what their plan is. Quackity and Sam could be here by now." He reaches out one hand, and Technoblade passes him the axe. A smart decision, Tubbo thinks; Dream is by far the weakest physically out of the three of them, after so much time here, and Techno and Tubbo can both easily fight with their hands.

Not that Tubbo's going to be doing much fighting, based on the way that both Techno and Dream are standing in front of him protectively. He crosses his arms and tries to keep himself from fidgeting as they wait to see who's on the other side of the lava.

It drops fully, and all three of them relax. Because those are *their* people over there, waiting for them, watching them. Tubbo shoves past Techno and Dream to stand at the edge of the lava.

There's Ranboo and Tommy standing at the front, and- Ranboo has Michael in his arms, what the hell, why did he bring their son in with him? He barely notices the others standing behind his best friends- Wilbur and Phil are pacing back and forth, George is standing stiller than a statue, Fundy and Foolish are slightly behind Sam, weapons raised and pointed at his back.

"Hey, big man!" Tommy yells. He's trying to smile, but his eyes are wide with shock. Tubbo reaches one hand up to ruffle his hair self-consciously. "How's it going?"

"Super great!" Tubbo calls back sarcastically. "Get us out of here, yeah?"

"Of course, mate," Phil says. "That's what we're here for."

Ranboo is looking at him with an expression similar to Tommy's- shock. Tubbo smiles half-heartedly.

"Why'd you bring Michael?" he calls.

"All our regular babysitters were busy," Ranboo responds without missing a beat, and Tubbo laughs. God, it feels good to laugh.

"Don't worry," he hears Techno mutter to Dream, quiet enough that those waiting on the other side can't listen in. "We'll make sure you get out of here."

"It's not the getting out part I'm worried about," Dream says, clutching the axe tightly. "It's what comes after."

The platform is moving over, no one standing on it, ready to receive them. The three step on together, and Sam brings it back.

"Maybe give someone else the axe?" Tommy tries. He looks uncomfortable with Dream walking toward him, and Tubbo expects Dream to snort and brush it off. He doesn't expect Dream to hand the axe over. Tubbo grips it tightly, and Tommy flashes a thumbs-up.

They step off the platform, and Phil is instantly jumping at Technoblade, pulling him into a tight

hug. Dream goes to George, raising one arm carefully, and George buries himself in Dream's arms. Tubbo half-collapses onto Ranboo and Tommy, letting the axe clatter to the ground. Ranboo shifts Michael into Tubbo's grip, and Tubbo holds his son as tightly as he can muster, Michael's little arms coming up to wrap around his neck.

"We match," Ranboo says, running a hand through Tubbo's hair. He butts his head up into Ranboo's hand, grinning widely. "You've got some new scars."

"Yeah," Tubbo agrees. Tommy reaches out to trace at the one on Tubbo's neck, and Tubbo scoffs and swats his hand away. "Clingy."

"I'm not clingy," Tommy says, pulling him away from Ranboo to hug him tightly, squashing Michael between them. "You're clingy. Bitch."

"Bitch," Tubbo repeats back at him. "How'd you get Sam to agree?"

"I don't think he was all that happy with this in the first place, to be honest," Ranboo says. Tubbo pulls away from them, keeping his grip on Michael, and sees Wilbur talking with both Techno and Dream. "We've got an escape plan."

"Oh?" Tubbo says. "What's our escape plan?"

"Run, basically," Tommy says. "We were mostly thinking about getting in. Didn't think too much about getting out."

"Great," Tubbo snorts. "Let's just- let's go, then, yeah?"

They make their way out of the prison, Sam leading them through the Warden's side of things, and they're so close to fresh air that Tubbo can practically taste it. He's hungry, and tired, and sore all over, and he thinks that he'd like to maybe take a very long vacation after this. That would be nice.

"Tubbo's stuff isn't here," Sam tells them as they make their way to the lockers. "Neither is Dream's. But Techno--"

“My stuff!” Techno says excitedly, rushing into one of the lockers. Phil follows him, and the rest of them make their way out of the prison.

Tubbo was right, the fresh air is fucking fantastic. What is *not* fantastic, however, is the group of people gathered outside the prison.

It’s... a lot of them. Pretty much everyone, Tubbo thinks. Most of them are a good ways back, just observing, but Quackity is standing with two swords held loosely in his grip, standing off against Niki and Puffy. The two women have their backs to the prison, weapons drawn and poised to fight.

“Well, well, well!” Quackity cries as they step outside. Tubbo takes a step back as Ranboo and Tommy draw their own weapons. Wilbur grins and pulls a sword, and George loads his bow. Tubbo is once again surprised by Dream’s actions when the masked man looks to him, then gestures for him to get back. “What do we have here? You thought you could plan a little prison break, huh?”

“I mean, we did plan one,” Tommy points out. “And we succeeded. So. I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

“Tommy,” Wilbur says warningly, and Quackity snorts.

“Yeah, Tommy,” he says. “Watch your mouth. Sam, what’s going on, my guy? Foolish, Fundy? Are you with them now? After all I did for you?”

“You didn’t do all too much for us, honestly,” Fundy replies. Foolish gives Sam a nudge forward, and Tubbo expects him to move to join Quackity, but he doesn’t budge.

“This is my prison, Quackity,” Sam says firmly. “Not yours. If I say it’s time for them to go, then it’s time for them to go.”

“Sure,” Quackity laughs. “And I’m sure everyone here agrees with that, right?” He turns back to the others, all of them watching, from every corner of the world. None of them look particularly pleased, but none of them step forward. At the back of the group, Tubbo can see Sapnap- the one he figured was the most likely to object- sword held at his side, looking... bored, almost.

“Well, I don’t know about everyone else,” Quackity scoffs, turning back. “But those three belong

in prison, where they aren't a threat to anyone else. Sure, I'll leave 'em alone. But for the safety of this entire world, they need to be locked up."

"I *dare* you," Ranboo says. He glances back at Tubbo, and Tubbo can see his eyes starting to turn a worryingly familiar shade of purple. "I *dare* you to try and touch Tubbo again."

"Yeah, you're not getting anywhere near him, bitch," Tommy agrees.

"I can certainly try," Quackity says, and without a moment's hesitation, Ranboo's sword is hitting the ground and he's darting forward. Everything else is frozen in time, and Tubbo is left beaming with pride as with all the agility of an enderman, Ranboo dodges Quackity's blades and slams him to the ground. Tommy is right behind him, sword pointed at Quackity's throat as Ranboo stands over him.

"Boo," Tubbo calls, and Ranboo turns back to him. His eyes are still purple, and his shoulders are heaving. Tubbo gestures to Michael, and Ranboo comes rushing back to them, eyes turning back to their red and green. Tommy remains where he is, ready to strike at Quackity.

"Locked up, you say?" Techno's voice calls from behind them, near the prison exit. He and Phil step out, both completely loaded with armor and weapons and God knows what else. "Like hell you're putting us back in there, Quackity. Like hell you're going to torture Dream or kill Tubbo again."

Quackity tries to shuffle back, and the other members of Las Nevadas step forward, along with a few others. Niki and Puffy part, letting Techno and Phil through to stand at the front of the group. Tommy steps aside, allowing Quackity to pull himself to his feet. Techno doesn't stop, walking forward until he's standing directly in front of Quackity, bearing down on him.

"If I had my way," Techno says, loud enough for everyone to hear, but still keeping his voice controlled. "You would not have the chance to hurt anyone, ever again. But it's not my choice to make."

"You're damn right, it's not your choice to make," Quackity says, and he shifts his stance to one of someone preparing to attack. Technoblade just *laughs* . And then he steps aside.

"See all these people standing behind me?" he says. "They all have a bone to pick with you."

“And I don’t see very many people on your side, Big Q,” Tommy adds.

“So if you want to take on all of us at once, be our guest,” Wilbur finishes firmly.

Quackity doesn’t move, obviously revealing the severity of the situation. No one is coming forward to back him up, and good, Tubbo thinks. They shouldn’t be.

“As I was saying,” Techno says. “Not my choice.”

He turns back and gestures, and he’s looking back and forth between Tubbo and Dream. Tubbo steps forward, and the group parts for him, letting him through. He hands Michael off to Ranboo, who holds their son tightly. There are muffled gasps from the people that haven’t seen him yet, and he doesn’t really need to wonder why- there’s a huge hole in his shirt from where Quackity stabbed him, there’s a sword mark along the entire left side and front of his neck from where his throat was slit, and the firework scars on his right side have been almost entirely decimated by burns from the lava. That and the fact that his hair is, apparently, half-white from all the revivals.

Dream steps forward, too, and Tubbo can see his gaze locked on Sapnap. Sapnap doesn’t move, however, just lets Dream and Tubbo continue to walk forward until they’re standing behind Technoblade.

“In case you weren’t aware!” Techno yells to the crowd gathered around them. “Quackity here has been torturing Dream for months, attempting to get information out of him. He did the same to Tubbo, and when Tubbo wouldn’t cooperate, he would kill him. I don’t know about any of you, but that doesn’t sound like fair and just punishment to me.”

There are mutters, and Tubbo knows they’re looking at him, so he looks back at his family instead. Tommy’s face is cold, but not directed at him. Ranboo nods encouragingly, and Michael grins and waves at him. The kid clearly has no idea what’s going on, but Tubbo appreciates the sentiment.

“So,” Techno continues. “As long as no one objects, I’m going to let the two of them choose. If I had my way, like I said, I would take Quackity’s final life here and now.”

Tubbo has no idea why Techno is doing this, honestly, but he isn’t complaining. Because he doesn’t want Quackity’s final life to be taken, it seems unfair, really, killing him for his crimes when there’s a perfectly good prison standing tall right behind them. He has no idea what Dream is thinking, and when he looks at the masked man, Dream is shaking his head.

“I recognize that I’ve made mistakes,” Dream says. “And that I’ve hurt people indescribably, and that I probably deserved to be in prison. I’ve threatened to kill Tubbo plenty of times, but I’ve never actually done it. That one’s all you, Quackity. And I don’t doubt that every time someone does something you don’t like, you would put them in prison to keep your hold on power.”

He glances at Tubbo, then at Sapnap, then back to Quackity. Quackity looks like he’s ready to die, like he knows it’s coming, like there isn’t even a chance. Tubbo makes his own choice then and there.

“It’s not my choice to make, either,” Dream says. “You didn’t kill me. But if Tubbo says the word, I’m not bringing you back.”

“Don’t kill him,” Tubbo blurts out instantly. “We used to hold trials, remember? We’ll do that again. We’ll hold a trial for Quackity, we’ll have a jury, and they’ll decide his fate. Until then, put him in the prison.”

“Does that sound good to everyone?” Techno yells. No one voices their complaints, and Quackity snorts and drops his weapons. He knows this is a fight that he can’t win.

“You’re going to regret this,” he snarls.

“No,” Techno says. “I don’t think we will.”

The crowd clears off, and Tubbo steps back. He can feel the rush of adrenaline leaving him, and his legs are getting wobbly. Tommy reaches out and wraps an arm around his waist, and Tubbo slings an arm over Tommy’s shoulders. Dream is stepping back, George and Wilbur rushing forward to support him. Sam, Foolish, and Fundy step forward.

“We’ll make sure he gets locked up properly,” Sam says, and Techno nods. At some point, Sam’s gotten the Warden’s axe back, and he’s holding it like he’s ready to strike. “Come on, Quackity.”

“You’ll all regret this!” Quackity yells again, and as they drag him into the prison Tubbo can feel his eyes drooping. He was expecting to have to fight for his life, honestly, but knowing there are so many people here to fight for him... it’s a nice feeling. He lets himself go a little bit limp in Tommy’s grasp. Ranboo is looking at him with concern.

“Come,” Niki announces. “We’ve got medical supplies at Phil’s house and plenty of space to rest. You can all decide where you’ll go from there.”

Tubbo doesn’t even make it all the way to the Syndicate- the last thing he sees before he passes out is Ranboo, Michael, and Tommy, all of them looking at him, real and in person and so beautifully alive.

Chapter End Notes

all the loose ends will be wrapped up and character decisions explained in the final chapter! see you there ;)

[playlist](#)

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comments/kudos/subs/etc are always appreciated!!!

it's almost over, it's just begun

Chapter Notes

chapter title from "all eyes on me" by bo burnham

and that's a wrap! thank you all so so so much for the support on this fic; it means the world to me. if you enjoyed consider a user sub! it's free, and you can always change your mind. i have a lot of fun stuff coming...

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Tubbo wakes up swaddled in blankets on a warm couch. He blinks one eye open wearily, taking in his surroundings, making sure he's safe- the first thing he sees is Michael, sitting on top of his chest, and the second thing he sees is Ranboo, attempting to get Michael to eat.

"Tubbo!" Ranboo says excitedly when he sees that Tubbo is awake. "Here- Michael, get off of Papa, let him sit up-"

Michael slides down to Tubbo's lap, and Ranboo reaches out his free arm to help Tubbo sit up. Tubbo takes in the rest of his surroundings- he's inside a cottage that he's pretty sure is Phil's. Technoblade is sitting in an armchair across the room, reading a book. He cranes his neck over the back of the couch and sees a mess of people in the kitchen. Niki and Puffy are both sitting on the counter, talking with Phil, Wilbur, and George. Tommy and Dream are in another corner of the room, muttering to each other, and the most surprising part is that they don't look like they want to kill each other.

"How long was I out?" Tubbo asks. He vaguely recalls Quackity being put in the prison just after their escape, and then collapsing on top of Tommy.

"A little less than a day," Ranboo says. "Don't worry, Techno and Dream both passed out too."

"I didn't pass out," Techno mutters without looking up from his book. He's in new clothes, sword leaning up against the chair near him.

"Well, you collapsed," Ranboo counters. "And then yelled something about keeping you and Tubbo and Dream together, so-"

“Just taking precautions,” Techno grunts, waving a hand dismissively. Tubbo knows he’s trying to save face, hold onto his reputation. God forbid the Blood God care about people, and all that. It leaves Tubbo smiling. “Hey, Tubbo.”

“Tubbo?” Tommy yells from across the room, and the next thing he knows there’s a warm body slamming into his side. Tommy wraps both arms around his neck and pulls him in, Michael shifting so that he can sit on top of both of them. “How are you feeling?”

Tubbo just turns and glares at Tommy, who grins sheepishly at him. It’s not like the sudden contact hurt, or anything, it was just a bit startling and also his whole body is still a bit sore. But he can breathe easily and moving around doesn’t hurt too much, so there’s that.

“Better,” he says. His stomach growls. “Hungry. Do we have food? Like, a lot of food?”

“Is that Tubbo?” Niki calls from the kitchen. “I’ll bring some food in a minute, we’re just getting George and Dream ready to leave.”

“To leave?” Tubbo asks as Dream wanders over from his corner of the room.

“We’re heading out,” he says. “Somewhere far away. Probably won’t be back for a while.”

Tubbo startles, almost; Dream is wearing normal clothes and he looks like he’s had a good shower- a completely different man from the one inside the prison. There isn’t a single weapon on his person, and he looks calmer.

“Oh,” Tubbo says quietly. “And you’re- gonna be okay?”

When did he start caring about Dream again? Or Technoblade? When did they start caring about him? Why the fuck did this happen to them, why did it happen to any of them, why couldn’t things have just stayed normal and peaceful, long before L’Manberg and any of the wars and-

Tubbo cuts off his train of thought before it can run completely rampant, and he tries to manage a smile at Dream.

“Yeah,” Dream laughs. “We’ll be okay, don’t worry about us.”

“Sapnap’s not gonna- hunt you down?” Because that’s the main thing he’s worried about, that Sapnap is going to come after all of them. Because he promised he would kill Dream if he escaped, and also he’s engaged to Quackity, isn’t he? Wouldn’t he be on Quackity’s side? But then he would have just killed them when he had the chance, and-

“Sapnap came by while you were out,” Tommy informs him. “They talked.”

“Oh,” Tubbo says. He’s not surprised, not really. Sapnap didn’t stand up for Quackity when everything was going down, so it makes sense that something would have changed. “Good, then.”

“We’ll see you later, Tubbo,” George says, ruffling Tubbo’s hair from over the back of the couch. “Hopefully not at that station, though.”

Tubbo grins, ignoring the confused looks of the others in the room. Wilbur snorts quietly, and Tommy laughs.

“Hopefully not,” Tubbo agrees. “Stay safe out there.”

Dream and George step outside, and Technoblade sets his book aside to follow them. As soon as the door is closed, Tubbo turns to Tommy, hoping that his expression says everything it needs to say. Tommy scowls.

“Yeah, we talked,” he says. “We don’t- we still don’t like each other. But we agreed to get along, for the ‘safety and security of the world,’ or whatever.”

Tubbo beams. He knows Tommy probably wanted to punch Dream in the face, and based on the fact that there was no bruising in sight, he held himself back.

“You’re learning from your mistakes,” he says proudly, and Tommy rolls his eyes.

“Yeah, he’s going to make new and even worse mistakes,” Ranboo quips, and Tubbo bursts into laughter. Niki comes over with food a moment later, and Tubbo tries to pace himself and *not* eat like a starving man. Once he’s finished a good amount of the homemade, still-warm bread she’s given him, he shoves Tommy over and lays back down. Technoblade comes back inside shortly after.

“Don’t you live next door?” Tubbo asks curiously. He’s got one hand in the air, and Michael is tracing the creases on his palm, completely entranced. Ranboo shifts so that his back is pressed against the couch and his head is near Tubbo’s other arm. “Why are you here?”

“Hm?” Techno says, glancing between all three teenagers, who are all staring at him. “I like Phil’s house.”

“More like you don’t want to let an eye off any of us,” Phil snorts from the kitchen. Techno scoffs and doesn’t say anything, which is all the confirmation they need.

“Thank you,” Tubbo says after a few moments of silence, as loudly as he can muster. “All of you. For getting us out of there.”

Niki is the first to respond, saying, “Of course, Tubbo. We stick together.”

“We do,” Wilbur confirms, and Tubbo smiles before he lets himself drift off to sleep.

Two days later finds Ranboo and Tommy loaded up with bags. Tubbo is holding Michael in his arms, and they’re preparing for the walk to the nearest Nether portal. Ranboo mentioned, sometime around the third time Tubbo woke up, that he wanted to take a vacation to the mountains. And Tubbo’s never one to deny his husband. Besides, the mountains sound nice.

“We’ll see you soon,” Niki says, hugging Ranboo tightly. Wilbur is ruffling Tommy’s hair, Phil laughing at them, and Techno puts a hand on Tubbo’s shoulder.

“Send us a message every day,” he says gruffly. “Or we’ll come looking for you.”

“Sure thing,” Tubbo says with a laugh, and he knows if he doesn’t get a message back he’s going to cut their vacation short without hesitation. “Thanks, big man.”

“Yeah, yeah, I’m not getting sappy,” Techno snorts.

“I didn’t say you were,” Tubbo retorts, grinning, and Techno shakes his head before patting Michael on the head and then giving Tubbo a little shove. Ranboo joins him a moment later, standing in the snow. The sun is shining; it’s a new day.

“Come on, then,” Tommy says, like he wasn’t the last one to be ready, bounding into the fresh powder. “We’ve got relaxation ahead of us!”

“Nothing is relaxing with you,” Ranboo deadpans, and Tubbo laughs. He holds his son tighter and takes the first step forward, Ranboo by his side and Tommy ahead, and continues on towards a more peaceful future.

Chapter End Notes

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